SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 416. FOR WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 19TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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No. 416.] For the Week ending December 19th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

A NEAT SWINDLE.

"MADAME vill pardon, but ze manager zay dis note ees bad, vot you call 'flash.'"

"Bad! Nonsense, I've just received it from the bank. Let me see it."

A dainty, nervous little hand snatches the note from the greasy Italian fingers. It is spread out on the table amidst the crumbs, and twisted and turned in every conceivable way.

A tear drops upon it.

"How much is my bill?"

"Four shilling an' tree pence."

"I have no other money than this note. My name is May Armitage, I live at 31, Thurston Gardens. I will send you the money."

The waiter's shoulders shrug meaningly.

"Oh, I see you want me to leave one of my rings. Very well."

Forthwith, an unoffending finger receives sundry violent tugs, and is only saved from laceration by the opportune arrival of a friend.

"Is anything the matter, Miss Armitage?"

"Oh, Mr. Hamilton, I am so glad to see you. The waiter here says this note is bad, and it is all the money I have. I was just going to leave one of my rings."

"Dear me, what a horrid predicament to be in. May I see the note? Hum! Yes, it is a bad one sure enough. We will see to this anon. Waiter, how much is this lady's bill?"

"Four an' tree pence, sare."

"Here's half-a-sovereign—never mind the change."

"Will you let me prescribe a glass of wine, Miss Armitage? You want it, I'm sure."

"No thanks. If you will see me to a cab my spirits will soon revive in the open air; but I was awfully frightened. I made sure they would take me to prison."

"Hardly"—smiling. "But tell me. Where did you get this note—do you remember?"

"Yes. I cashed a cheque at Coutts' a few minutes before I came in here."

"Strange. Well, come along, I will see you into a cab, and then go and interview the bank people."

"You are very, very good, Mr. Hamilton. Really, I don't know what I should have done if——."

"If I hadn't turned up at the critical moment like the hero in a novel."

Two men sitting at an adjoining table had been intently watching this little drama, but not until the waiter had re-arranged the table did a single word pass between them.

"Very neat, wasn't it?"

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"Yes. I suppose it was. She was a handsome girl."

"Good generalship having your retreat covered."

"What retreat?"

"Why, it was clear as daylight. The man held back, in case the game got spotted. Friend of the lady—bah!"

"The girl is perfectly innocent. The waiter changed the note."

"Did you see him do it?"

"No."

"Then how do you know he did it?"

"The note the lady gave him was *folded*. The one he brought back was only *crumpled* a bit."

"You're a smart chap, Harris, but why didn't you arrest him?"

"I preferred waiting for developments. There's more behind this than we know. I don't think it was entirely an accident that gentleman's coming on the scene at the right moment. You go to Coutts' and get the number of the note. Then keep an eye on the waiter—shadow him home."

At ten o'clock that same night Detective-Inspector Harris was informed that the bird had flown—in other words that the waiter had vanished during the officer's visit to the bank.

"Never mind, Smith—we ought to have arrested him there and then, but I thought it was something more than a mere sleight-of-hand trick."

Detective-Inspector Harris was something of a philosopher.

* * * * *

The Armitages, father and daughter, were discussing supper and spurious bank-notes. Although not a business man, Mr. Armitage knew his way about, and nothing could dissuade his mind from the certainty that the waiter had changed the note. His daughter was just as positive the note the waiter returned was the original one, but paterfamilias knew better; and quite a heated argument followed. Neither would give way a jot, and Papa Armitage allowed such oddities of expression as "pish," "bosh," etc., to occasionally escape, and no doubt, he being of an excitable nature, these would have soon given way to stronger terms had not a servant entered the room with a letter.

"What's this?" testily.

"A man brought it and he's waiting for an answer."

Mr. Armitage tore open the envelope and read the note.

"Great Cæsar! May, this is shocking."

"Whatever is it, father?"

"Why, Hamilton has been caught somehow with that bad note, and is in trouble about it."

"Where is he? Oh, how dreadful this all is. I wish I hadn't gone to that place." Then to the servant: "Who is it?"

"I don't know."

"Send the man in here, and get my boots, and order a cab," said Mr. Armitage.

The messenger was ushered in. He was a typical representative of the criminal class, and had that hunted, cunning look, the stamp of *his* genius.

"Where is this gentleman?"

"I'll take you to him, but I carn't give the show away."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, if I tells you where 'e are"—jerking a thumb over his shoulders—"you'd blow the gaff. No, I'll take you there all on the square, mister."

"I had better go, my dear."

"Oh, father, I am so frightened. Do take a policeman with you."

"Wouldn't do, miss. Yer pa and the gen'l'man al' be 'ome in 'arf-an-hour, miss, an' no 'arm shall come to them. Just you leave that to me, miss."

The cab was dismissed at Tottenham Court Road corner, and Mr. Armitage was then led by this mysterious guide through side-streets and alleys, along dark passages—in short, Mr. Armitage knew he was being taken a roundabout way as a blind. It was a waste of strategy, for once off the main thoroughfare Mr. Armitage was lost as to his whereabouts.

This procession of two finally stopped. After some preconcerted signals had been exchanged between Mr. Armitage's escort and those within the grimy-looking house, Mr. Armitage was invited to enter. The room into which he was ushered was in marked contrast to the exterior of the building, for though it was large, and one end furnished with gambling materials, the other had some claim to be termed luxurious.

Hamilton was seated in one corner, and rose as Mr. Armitage entered.

"My dear Hamilton, I am sorry about this; I feel that it is partly my——"

"My hands are tied, Mr. Armitage."

"What do you mean?"

Addressing a yellow-skinned, frock-coated individual, who stood close to Hamilton.

"The gent. turned rusty a bit, and we had to clap on the curb—ha, ha!"

"How did this happen, Hamilton?"

"I'm ashamed of myself, sir, but will tell you all. I met one or two old friends this evening and I drank more wine than usual. When I left them I met this man—whom I had never seen before—we had drinks and finally I came in here and played baccarat. I lost, and what with the excitement of the game and the wine, I forgot all about that bad note, and—well, discovered that I was among a lot of sharps."

"Steady, sir, I think our money will bear a better scrutiny than yours."

"Well, I suppose you want the money made good. How much is it?"

"One hundred pounds—cash."

"One hundred pounds? Have you lost all that, Hamilton?"

"Allow me to explain, my dear sir; but won't you take a seat?"

"No, I won't."

"As you please, of course. Now the case stands thus: this gentleman has lost about forty or fifty pounds only, but after what has happened it is quite certain that my establishment——"

"Gambling hell."

The cynical coolness of this man was slowly but surely rousing the ire of Mr. Armitage.

"As you are going to pay the piper, my dear sir, you shall select the—eh, music—I will therefore call it a gambling hell, as you like the sound better, and it, as I was saying, will have to close—or to be more correct, not open again, but I must live. Ah, yes, I know what you want to say, my dear sir, and what if I do live by my wits? I don't try and pass spurious bank-notes, but try to work on the square—so I must have a hundred or hand this nobleman over to the police."

Then sitting down, the gentleman calmly rolled a cigarette, lit it, and seemed on good terms with himself.

"Can he do this, Hamilton?"

"I'm afraid he can, sir, so, as they won't accept my cheque, would you mind drawing one out for the amount, and I will give you mine for it?"

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"Certainly, my boy—hi, fellow, bring some ink and a pen."

"You dear, innocent old gentleman, do you think I am such a fool as to accept a cheque? Not if you made it out for ten thousand. I must have hard cash, or good—mind good—notes."

"And—do—you think I go about with a hundred pounds in my pockets?"

"Perhaps not. You could raise it among your friends, though."

"Why, bless me, it is after midnight—the thing is impossible."

"It is late, I'll admit. See here, you seem a decent old bird, will you give me your word as a gentleman that your cheque will be duly honoured?"

"I will."

"Then I don't mind obliging you, but mind, any hanky panky will mean skilly for this, eh?—nobleman, I think I called you, sir!"

Half-an-hour after handing over the cheque, Mr. Armitage and Hamilton were comfortably settled in the dining-room at 31, Thurston Gardens. Miss Armitage, satisfied that her father had safely returned, and had got the prisoner duly bailed, discreetly retired.

The two men talked for some time, and then lapsed into silence—a silence that became irksome to both, yet neither cared to carry on the desultory conversation that talking meant. Finally Hamilton rose to go.

"And now, Mr. Armitage, before I go, let me get out of your debt as far as money is concerned. I can pay you back your loan, but your kindness will always be a debt."

Hamilton produced a cheque-book, and looked round the room for some ink.

"Just put that away, my boy. I don't know, and don't want to pry into your private affairs, but I dare say I can afford to lose the money better than you can, and if it hadn't been for your kindness to my girl this afternoon—this would never have happened. Now just slip off home, and let it be a warning to you to avoid gambling, and indulging in too much wine."

"It is very kind, indeed, of you, sir, and I thank you also for the gentle admonition, but as this is a debt of honour, I must insist upon your taking it back."

"Stuff and nonsense—come, be off and don't let me hear any more of this. Come and lunch with us to-morrow—to-morrow, why it's to-day—one thirty prompt—don't forget."

"Very well, sir, we will postpone the discussion until then."

* * * * *

The house in Fitzroy Street was the scene of an animated discussion early the next morning.

Three highly respectable gentlemen were what they called sharing the spoil. They were Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Martin—he of the saffron-hued countenance—and Maloney, the Italian waiter.

"You two can do and go where you like. I want half."

"Cool, Hammy, very. What about the expenses Tony and I have incurred?"

"And who risked the whole thing by swopping the note I'd like to know, not to mention the chance of Holloway?"

"I give you both credit for the work you have done, but mine has been the master mind. I formulated the scheme, worked it out to detail, and provided you and Tony with the necessary information. I kept you posted in that girl's movements, and——"

"Dry up, Hammy. Let's take equal share of the ex's and then you take two-thirds of the remainder. You see it cost a clear forty quid squaring those waiters at the café."

"You or Tony have that other tenner?"

"Oh, yes, my cherub, with the number—worse than stopped."

"Well, settle your own affairs yourselves; I must have my half now. I'm lunching with the Armitages in an hour's time and must be off."

"Strike me putrid, Hammy, but you're an' out-and-outer. What's the game now? Can we assist?"

"Not this time, I'm going in for the girl."

"By all that's blue if that isn't the coolest thing I've ever run across. Finger out his flimsies, Tony, he won't forget his pals when he's spliced."

And Mr. Hamilton left Fitzroy Street *en route* for his victim's house.

* * * * *

"Father will be down directly, Mr. Hamilton, he is with a very old friend of his—talking over old times, I suppose."

"I am glad of the opportunity, Miss May, to tell you how repentant I am for last night's affair. Indeed, were it not that your father absolutely refused to accept the money he lent me, I wouldn't have had the audacity to come here."

"Ah, but whose fault was it you had that bad note?"

"Quite so, my dear Miss May, but I oughn't to have taken so much wine, and I certainly should not have gone to that gambling place. If I could have been run in—I mean suspected of trying to pass bad money at some legitimate place, and had been taken to a police station, it would have made me quite happy."

"Really?"

"Yes, I should have felt what a football player would call 'nearer the goal.'"

Such a sweet blush.

"Ah! here is last night's victim of the note, Harrison. Let me introduce you?"

"Hamilton—General Harrison—a very old friend of mine."

Dead pause.

"Have you two met before?"

"I think I have had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Hamilton more than once. So you think this man the victim, do you? Armitage, he is the biggest scoundrel unhung."

"Come, come, Harrison, you are mistaken, surely."

"We'll soon see. Take off that wig. Take off that wig, I say."

Behold Mr. Hamilton with a semi-shaven head.

"Now send for the police. You hesitate, Armitage?"

"Look here, my man, you see the game's up; did you share in last night's business?"

"I did"—reluctantly.

"Well," gasped Mr. Armitage, "talk about the brigands of Italy—they are fools, simply fools. I should like to know how this has been so cleverly worked out though."

And he did.

Martin and Antonio Maloney made good their escape, but Hamilton (with scores of aliases), through his audacity, failed to reach the desired goal, but was successfully incarcerated.

Inspector Harris missed a golden opportunity of distinguishing himself.

C. England Cowan.

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THE PROPHECY.

I don't remember what day of August in the year 1816 it was that there came to the doors of the Captain-General of Granada a certain ragged and uncouth gipsy, seventy years of age, by trade a sheep-bearer, by name Heredia, astride of a lean and shambling black donkey whose whole equipment consisted of a halter about its neck!

The man, immediately on dismounting, said: "I want to see the Captain-General."

Needless to say, such presumption awoke in turn the resistance of the sentinel, the laugh of the orderlies, and the doubt and hesitancy of the aides-de-camp, before he was brought to the notice of the Most Excellent Señor Don Eugenio Portcarrero, then Captain-General of the ancient kingdom of Granada; but as that dignitary was a man of kindly disposition, and already knew of Heredia, renowned for his tricks, his bargains, and his love for his neighbour's goods, order was given to let the gipsy enter.

Once within the office, he fell on his knees, exclaiming: "Blessed be Mary, Most Holy, and long life to your Honour, ruler of this little world."

"Get up and leave off ceremony and tell me what you have to say," replied the Count with seeming severity.

Heredia at once drew a long face, and said: "Well, my lord, I have come that the thousand *reals* may be given me."

"What thousand *reals?*"

"Those offered a few days ago by proclamation to anyone bringing information about Parrón."

"Indeed! You knew him then?"

"No, sir."

"Well?"

"I know him now."

"How?"

"Very simply! I tracked him, I saw him, I bring the information, I claim the reward."

"Are you sure you have *seen* him?" said the Captain-General, with an interest that overcame his doubts.

The gipsy burst out laughing, and said: "It's very evident that your Honour thinks 'this gipsy is like them all, and wants to cheat me.' May God never forgive me if I lie! I *saw* Parrón yesterday."

"But do you realise the importance of what you are saying? Do you know that for years we have pursued this monster, this bandit, whom nobody has ever seen and lived? Do you know that every day, in different parts of the *sierra* he robs wayfarers and then shoots them, for, as he says, dead men tell no tales; and by this means only has he escaped being brought to justice? Finally, do you know that *to see Parrón means death?*"

The gipsy laughed again, and said: "Doesn't your Honour know that what a gipsy cannot do no one on earth can? Does anyone know when our laughing or crying is real? Does your Honour know a fox as tricky as we are? I repeat, General, that not only have I seen Parrón, but I have talked with him."

"Where?"

"On the road to Tózar."

"Give me proof."

"Listen, your Honour! Yesterday morning, eight days since, my donkey and I fell into the hands of some robbers. They bound me fast, and led me through some bewildering hollows till we came to the clearing where the bandits camped; a cruel suspicion laid hold on me. 'Can these be Parrón's people?' I was constantly asking myself; 'if so, there's no remedy, for this devil has decreed that eyes that have seen his face shall never see another.'

"While I was thus cogitating there approached me a man, strangely but elegantly dressed, who, slapping me on the shoulder, said: 'Friend! I am Parrón!'

"To hear this and fall backwards was one and the same thing. The bandit burst out laughing. I arose, trembling, fell on my knees, and cried out in every tone of voice I could muster: 'Blessed be thy soul, king of men! Who would not have known thee by the princely bearing God has given thee! May there be mothers to bear more such sons! Let me kiss you, my son! May this little gipsy die in torment if he was not wishing to meet you and tell your fortune, and kiss your lordly hands. Behold me at your service. Do you want to know how to trade dead donkeys for live ones? Do you want to sell your old horses for the price of young ones? Do you want to teach French to a mule?'"

The Count Montijo could not suppress a laugh. Then he asked: "And what said Parrón to all this? What did he do?"

"The same as your Honour; he laughed with all his might."

"And you?"

"I, my lord, laughed, too, while tears as big as oranges ran down my cheeks."

"Proceed!"

"Presently he held out his hand to me, and said: 'Friend, you are the only man of talent that has fallen in my power; all the others have had the bad taste to annoy me by weeping and wailing and the like nonsense, which puts me into a bad humour; you alone have made me laugh, and if it were not for these tears——'

"'What? Your Honour, they are for joy!'

"'I believe it, you poor fool. It's the first time for six or seven years that I have laughed; truth is, I haven't wept either. But let us hasten. Eh, boys?'

"For Parrón to say this, and for me to be surrounded by a ring of blunderbusses was quicker than a wink. 'Have mercy on me!' I began to screech.

"'Halt!' cried Parrón. 'We are not ready for this yet. I called you to find out what you took from this man.'

"'A donkey with his hide on.'

"'And money?'

"'Three *duros* and seventy *reals*.'

"'Now then, leave us alone,' and they all withdrew.

"'Now tell me my fortune,' said the robber, extending his hand to me. I took hold of it and thought a moment. I knew I was in a position to speak freely, so I said to him, with all the conviction of my heart: 'Parrón,

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sooner or later, whether you take my life or leave it to me, you will die on the gallows!'

"'I know that already,' answered the bandit with perfect calmness. 'Tell me *when!*'

"I began to consider. This man, said I to myself, is going to free me; to-morrow I'll be in Granada, and preach; the next day they'll take him; then the trial will begin. 'Do you ask *when?*' I said aloud. 'Then take notice, it will be during next month.'

"Parrón shuddered and so did I, fearing my love of fortune-telling would be my death.

"'Look you, gipsy,' replied Parrón very deliberately, 'you will remain in my power, and if by the end of next month they do not hang me, I will hang you, as sure as they hanged my father. If I die by that time you will go free.'

"'Much obliged,' said I to myself, 'to pardon me after death,' and I repented for having made the time so short. We stayed at the aforesaid camp, and I was locked up in a cave, while Parrón mounted his mare, and took the track through the bushes."

"All right," said the Count, "I understand; Parrón is dead; you are free; and therefore you know his whereabouts."

"Quite the contrary, my General! Parrón is alive! And now comes the blackest part of my story.

"A week passed without the Captain coming to see us, and, as far as I could make out, he had not shown himself in the neighbourhood since the evening I told his fortune; a thing not at all extraordinary, as my guards told me. For, do you know, the chief goes away alone occasionally, and doesn't return till it suits him. The fact is, we know nothing whatever of him during these long absences. About this time, by force of entreaty, and having told the fortunes of the band, prognosticating freedom from hanging and comfortable old age for all, I had succeeded in getting them to take me out during the evenings, and bind me to a tree, for I was smothering with heat in the cell. Needless to say, there was a pair of them continually at my side.

"One evening, about six o'clock, the robbers who had been on 'duty' by command of Parrón's lieutenant, returned to camp, bringing with them a miserable reaper forty to fifty years old, manacled, and crying fit to break one's heart. 'Give me back my twenty *duros!*' he said. 'Ah, if you only knew what it cost me to earn them! A whole summer's reaping in the sun! A whole summer away from my wife and children! And so I scraped together by my toil and self-denial this sum, that we might live this winter, and that on reaching home I might embrace them, and pay the debts the unfortunate ones have contracted, so that they might live. Ought I to lose this money, which is a fortune to me? Pity, gentlemen! Give me my twenty *duros*, for the sake of the most Holy Mary of Sorrows.'

"A mocking laugh answered the plaints of the old man. Bound as I was to the tree, I shook with terror! For gipsies, too, have families.

"'Don't be a fool!' finally said a bandit, going to the reaper. 'You do wrong in thinking of money when more important matters should occupy your thoughts.'

"'How?' said the reaper, not supposing there could be a greater misfortune than his children going without bread.

"'You are in Parrón's hands.'

"'Parrón? I don't know him—never heard of him. I come a long way; I belong to Alicante, and was reaping in Sevilla.'

"'But, my friend, Parrón means *death!* Everyone that falls into our hands must die; therefore, make your will in two minutes, and your peace with God in the next two. Make ready! Aim! You have four minutes.'

"'I am going to improve them. Hear me, for pity's sake.'

"'Speak.'

"'I have six children and one unfortunate—*widow*, I will say, since I must die; for I read in your eyes that you are worse than wild beasts—yes, worse—for beasts of the same species do not destroy each other. Oh, pardon! I know not what I say. Gentlemen, some one of you must be a father! Is there not a father—is there not a father among you? Do you know what it is to have children starving all the winter? Do you know what it is for a mother to see the children of her blood die, crying: "I am hungry; I am cold?" Gentlemen, I don't want to live without them; for what would life be to me?—a chain of toil and privation. But I must live for my children's sake—oh, my children, children, of my heart!'

"The father dragged himself along the ground and turned his face to the robbers. Such a face! It seemed like one of those saints that King Nero threw to the lions, as the preachers say. The robbers felt something stir within their breasts; then they looked at one another, and, seeing all were of one accord, one made bold to say——"

"What said he?" asked the Captain-General, deeply affected by the story.

"He said: 'Comrades, what we are about to do must never be known to Parrón.'

"'Never! Never!' muttered the rest of the bandits.

"'Go thy way, good man,' said another, almost weeping, and I made signs to the reaper that he should instantly go.

"'Quick! March!' they said, and all turned their backs. The reaper held out his hand beseechingly.

"'Aren't you satisfied?' growled one. 'Do you want your money besides? Go! go! Do not try our patience!'

"The poor father went away weeping, and soon was out of sight.

"Perhaps a half-hour later, and which was taken up by the bandits swearing one another not to tell the Captain they had freed a man, there suddenly appeared Parrón, leading the reaper alongside his mare.

"The bandits fell back astounded. Parrón dismounted leisurely, unslung his two-barrelled carbine, and aiming at his comrades, said: 'Fools! Idiots! I know not why I do not shoot every one of you! Quick! give back to this man the twenty *duros* you took from him!' The robbers produced the money and gave it to the reaper, who cast himself at the feet of the bandit chief who had so kind a heart.

"Parrón said to him: 'By the peace of Heaven! without your directions I never should have found them. Now, you see you mistrusted me without cause. I have fulfilled my promise—you have your twenty *duros*. Now be off!'

"The reaper kissed him again and again, and departed full of joy; but he had gone hardly fifty paces when his benefactor called him anew, and the poor man hastened to retrace his steps.

"'What is your command?' said he, anxious to do a service to him who had restored happiness to his family.

"'Do you know Parrón?' asked the man himself.

"'I know him not.'

"'You mistake,' said the chief, 'I am he!'

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"The reaper stood stupefied. Parrón brought his carbine to his cheek and fired both barrels at the reaper, who fell rolling on the ground.

"'May you be accursed,' were the only words he spoke. During the terror that blinded me I felt the tree to which I was bound quiver slightly, and that my bonds were loose. One of the balls after having wounded the reaper, hit the cord which held me fast, and cut it. I concealed my freedom and waited a chance for escape. Meantime Parrón, pointing to the reaper, said to his men: 'Now you can rob him. You pack of idiots! You lot of fools! To free this man that he might go as he did, howling along the highway! Fortunately it was I that met him, and learnt what had happened, for had it been the soldiers, he would have shown them the way to this camp, same as he did to me, and we would all have been in prison by this. See the result of robbing and not killing; but enough of preaching, bury this body before it rot.'

"While the robbers were digging a grave, Parrón was feeding, with his back to me. Little by little I moved from the tree, and slipped down a hollow near by. It was already night, and shielded by the darkness, I set out with all haste. By the starlight I found my donkey who was quietly feeding, tied to an ash-tree. I mounted him and never stopped till I got here. Therefore, my lord, give me the thousand *reals*, and I will put you on Parrón's track, who, by-the-bye, has kept my three-and-a-half *duros*."

The gipsy, having given a description of the bandit, afterwards received the promised reward, and departed from the General's office, leaving the Count and a person then present, from whom I had these details, utterly confounded. It remains to be seen whether Heredia guessed aright when he foretold Parrón's destiny.

Fifteen days after the scene we have just described took place, about nine in the morning, a large crowd of idlers attended the assembling of two companies of soldiers in the streets of San Juan de Dios and part of that of San Felipe, in the aforesaid capital city, who, about a half-hour later, were to set out in quest of Parrón, the description of his hiding-place, his person, and his comrades having been finally approved by the Count of Montijo. The interest and excitement of the public was extraordinary, and none the less so was the soberness with which the soldiers took leave of families and friends before starting on so important an expedition: such fear had Parrón aroused throughout the whole kingdom of Granada.

"Seems we are ready to fall in," said one soldier to his comrade. "But I don't see Cabo-Lopéz."

"That's strange, too, for he was always on hand first of any when there was talk of hunting Parrón. He hated him with all his heart."

"So, don't you know what has happened?" said a third one, joining in the talk.

"Hello! this must be our new man. How do you like our company?"

"Very well, indeed," answered the one inquired of, a man of pale complexion and fine shape, which was partly hidden by the uniform.

"What were you saying?" asked the first.

"Ah, yes. Cabo-Lopéz is dead," replied the pale-faced one.

"Manuel! What are you talking about? This can't be. I, myself, saw Lopéz this morning, surely as I see you now."

Manuel said: "Half-an-hour ago Parrón killed him."

"Parrón! Where?"

"Right here in Granada. They found Lopéz's dead body on the Dog's Hill."

All kept silent except Manuel, who began to whistle a patriotic air.

"Eleven men gone in six days," said a sergeant. "Parrón means to exterminate us! But how comes it that he is in Granada? Aren't we going to look in the Sierra-de-Loja?"

Manuel ceased whistling, and said with his usual recklessness: "An old woman who saw the deed says that since he killed Lopéz, she hopes, if we look for him, we may have the pleasure of seeing him."

"Comrade! aren't you pretty bold to speak of Parrón with such contempt?"

"Well, is Parrón more than a man?" asked Manuel with a shrug.

Just then "Fall in!" was shouted by various tongues. The two companies formed and roll call was begun.

Now it happened that at that moment Heredia was going by, and like everyone else, stopped to admire the soldiers.

It seemed as if Manuel, the new soldier, gave a start, and fell back a little so as to hide behind his comrades, when Heredia caught sight of him, gave a yell, and, jumping as if he had stepped on a viper, started to run up San Yeronimos Street.

Manuel raised his musket and aimed at the gipsy, but another soldier was quick enough to strike the gun up, and the shot was spent in the air.

"He's crazy! Manuel has gone mad! A soldier has lost his wits!" was shouted in succession by the lookers-on, and officers, sergeants, and privates fell on the man, who was struggling to escape, and whom, after they had subdued him, they plied with questions, accusations and insults which drew from him no response whatever. Meantime, Heredia had been seized by some passers-by, who, seeing him running and hearing the musket shot, took him for a malefactor.

"Lead me to the Captain-General," said the gipsy; "I must speak to the Count of Montijo—Count of Montijo, indeed!"

"Who have you killed?" asked his captors. "Here comes the guard and they'll know what to do with you."

"I think so, too," said Heredia, "but be careful not to let Parrón kill me."

"What do you mean by Parrón? What's the man talking about?"

"Come and you will see," and, so saying, the gipsy made them take him to the Commandant of the platoon, and, pointing to Manuel, he said: "Commandant, this is Parrón, and I am the gipsy who two weeks ago gave a description of him to the Count of Montijo."

"Parrón! Parrón is taken! A soldier proved to be Parrón!" shouted the crowd.

"No doubt about it," said the Commandant, reading the orde- given him by the Captain-General. "We certainly have been very stupid; but who would have thought of looking for the robber chief among the very soldiers that were searching for him."

"Fool that I am," Parrón was saying to himself, regarding the gipsy with eyes wonderfully like a lion's. "He is the only man to whom I ever granted life. I deserve what has happened."

The week following Parrón was executed, and so the gipsy's prophecy was literally fulfilled.

Pedro Antonio de Alarcon.

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It had been a white morning for Kenyon.

A quick lightness and elation marked his step as he paced to and fro before his easel. His head was high, his grey eyes bright, and his shrill whistle rang joyously through the studio, flooded from the lofty skylight with pale April radiance. His brush dashed at the canvas impetuously, confidently; a hundred little inspirations of the happy moment guiding it to the desired effect. It seemed he could do nothing amiss.

The slim, white-armed girl on the model-throne—an exquisite harmony of singing tones—appeared to glow with some reflection of the painter's face. She had posed in perfection, with but a five-minutes' rest, for two hours. Two hours which seemed like twenty minutes to Kenyon, tramping absorbedly backwards and forwards over the fragments of his cherished meerschaum, an old friend unheedingly sacrificed in a moment's frenzy of delight.

Now and then he warbled contentedly, in a thin falsetto, an air which resembled nothing in particular; and then fell to whistling again, with short intervals of contemplative silence, always succeeded by a simultaneous outburst of paint and vocal jubilation.

It was a morning in a thousand. And there yet remained another good hour of the sitting, with much to be done. When, therefore, the little electric bell at the door suddenly thrilled out sharply, Kenyon only stopped short in the midst of the "Habanera," scowled viciously, and went on with his work. The dead silence which fell upon the room had not the desired effect of routing the unwelcome visitor. After the lapse of a long minute the bell rang again; and this appeal, evoking from within nothing except an imprecation sufficiently deep, but audible, was succeeded by a smart knock on the panel of the door.

Kenyon crossed the room to assure himself that the bolt protected him from forcible invasion; and satisfied that it did, he was about to turn away, when a lady's visiting card was pushed over the lintel. He waited another minute and then, assuming that the owner had departed, went and picked up the card. It read "Baroness Folkner von Tannhausen," and, written in pencil below the name, "begs that Mr. Kenyon will give her a short interview on urgent business."

Whether from gallantry or curiosity or apparent necessity, Kenyon yielded. He shrugged his shoulders, with a look of bored vexation, called to the model, "Rest, Mamie," and when the shimmer of her green robes had disappeared in the little corridor, which separated his living-room from the studio, he unbolted and opened the outer door.

A short woman, dressed in mourning, rustled past him, bending her head slightly in answer to his somewhat ironical bow. Kenyon silently set a chair for her, and she seated herself, putting aside the heavy crape veil from her face.

"Mr. Kenyon," she said, "I hope you'll forgive me for intruding in this way. I know you were busy, but I was so anxious to see you—and I sail to-morrow morning."

She spoke with perfect fluency, but yet with an undefinable accent, which was not German; while her mature and faded charms were of a surprising type: half Spanish, half Oriental. Her manner had a certain authority, which fitted better, perhaps, than her title, but not so well as her gown. It was the self-confidence of a woman accustomed to admiration and applause—hardly that of the "great lady" to whom the title and name, by no means unknown, seemed to point.

Kenyon walked to a small table near by, laid down his palette and brushes, and returned.

"I am at your disposal, madam," he said coldly.

"I wish—I wish to ask you to execute a commission for me—a portrait."

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A slight nervousness here manifested itself in her manner. Her long, black eyes, which, with the straight brows and narrow forehead, were now the sole charm of her face, left Kenyon's and roved restlessly

"I am at your disposal, madam."

over the pale-toned walls, lined half-way up with canvases framed and unframed, in all stages of evolution. Other canvases were stacked at the back of the studio, partly concealed by a large screen of Moorish fretwork, over which had been thrown a heap of gauzy orange-coloured draperies, and the black eyes rested on these.

She went on abruptly: "You painted not long ago, I believe, a portrait of Karl Savary, the singer—is it not so?"

"Yes," said Kenyon, in some surprise.

"What has become of that picture?"

"It is here."

"Here—in this place?"

"Yes, madam."

"How is that—it is not your property?"

"Yes," said Kenyon. He went on, half unwillingly, half amused at this catechism: "You see, the picture was not quite finished at the time of Savary's death. His affairs were left in confusion. His relatives are poor people in Germany—and, in short, the portrait remains with me."

"Is it for sale?—but why do I ask? Mr. Kenyon, what I want is a small copy of that picture. Will you make it for me?"

Kenyon hesitated a few moments, looking curiously at his visitor. Her request had suggested to him an odd train of ideas. Across these suddenly flashed into his mind the remembrance of a face like and unlike this matronly, double-chinned, coarse-fleshed countenance—a young face, with the same glancing eyes and narrow brow, but full of life and colour.

"I have seen you somewhere," he said, with unconscious brusqueness.

She made a quick movement of exasperation, and the colour rose dully in her dark cheeks.

"Very likely. But what difference does that make? You have not answered me."

"I beg your pardon," said Kenyon slowly, realising that her eyes had been on his with an intense eagerness. Plainly she attached no little importance to the request. His first impulse had been to refuse, but after a moment he said slowly:

"I don't know. I am very busy just at present——"

"A month—two months, then? Can I have it in two months?"

"Well—yes. In two months."

She drew a long breath. "And now, may I see the picture? I have heard much of it. I have even seen a photograph of it. It has been exhibited here, yes? But show it to me, please."

She rose to her feet and threw the long veil back over her shoulders. Her eyes were very bright, her whole face almost childishly eager. Despite her years and her stoutness, which the lines of her well-cut gown did not succeed in concealing, she still possessed a certain attraction—the charm of a woman secure of herself, accustomed to please.

Kenyon withdrew his eyes from her with an effort due less to this charm than to the faint-floating ghost of a recollection which teased him with its persistent intangibility. He dragged out from behind the Moorish screen a large canvas, and with some difficulty, due to its unwieldly size, got it across the room and put it into the gilt frame destined for it when complete. The Baroness stood with her back to him. He spoke to her twice. Then suddenly she wheeled about and faced the picture. Her eyes dilated, her lips parted.

"*Dios mio!* It is he!" she murmured.

Her face seemed like a translucent mask behind which some pale radiance flickered in gusts. All at once her eyes brimmed over. Her gloves, which she had stripped off, fell to the floor, and her hands, glittering with immense diamonds, clasped a richly-jewelled cross which flashed from the crape folds of her corsage. After some moments she turned and looked up at Kenyon through her tears as frankly as a child.

"He was a dear friend of mine," she said softly. "He died here, far away from—from his home. You must have seen him often; you must have known him well—to paint him like that. Tell me—tell me something of him."

"Yes, I knew him in a way," said Kenyon absently. "I saw him nearly every day while that was going on," indicating the picture. "And yet I didn't know him well. But"—here he hesitated and his voice softened, "I was with him when he died."

"Ah—h!"

She moved backwards, her eyes still on his, and sank into a chair, and Kenyon, momentarily forgetting his interrupted work and the model waiting behind the screen, sat down near her.

"You know it was pneumonia," he went on. "He had taken a bad cold somehow, and he persisted in working on in spite of the doctors. It was the first big season of Wagner opera here, and the success of it depended on Savary; and, of course, he knew it. He finished the week with a great performance of 'Tannhäuser'—then went home to his hotel and gave

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up. Before morning he was delirious; they had to take him to the hospital. He died there three days later at daybreak."

The Baroness dried her eyes, and twisted her handkerchief in and out of her begemmed fingers.

"And you were with him those two days?"

"Yes. He was delirious nearly all the time. He never knew me."

"And did he suffer much during this terrible illness?"

"Poor fellow—yes."

She shivered, caught her breath, and her lips quivered.

"It was very—good of you, Mr. Kenyon——"

"No. There seemed to be no one else."

"No one else? No one—out of all who loved him? Oh, Heavens!"

She bowed her face in her hands; then, after a little while, looked up, carefully dried her eyes again, and said, with an effort at composure:

"Pardon me for distressing you. It is very bad taste, I know. But tell me one thing more. When he was delirious—he talked a great deal, of course."

"Yes. But most in some German dialect with which I am not familiar. I caught only a word here and there—generally something about his home, or the lake and the linden trees——"

"Ah, yes—poor boy! He was so young and strong—to die like that. His beautiful face, his beautiful voice—gone, gone for ever! But the good God knows best." She bent her head and pressed the diamond cross to her lips. Then she looked up quickly, piercingly, at Kenyon. "Did he speak any name, do you remember? any woman's name?"

"No. He called several times for his mother."

"Poor boy, he has found her now. You are quite sure—no other name?"

"I heard no other," said Kenyon, with a little frown of displeasure.

She turned her head and looked long and silently at the picture.

"I have seen him like that so often," she murmured. "What a chest—what arms! Golden hair, golden voice—heart of gold! He was a man!"

Suddenly she rose. "Pardon me for taking so much of your time, Mr. Kenyon. I am ashamed of my thoughtlessness. And now—my picture?"

"You shall have it in two months."

"Thank you. I will give you the address of my banker in Berlin. Please send it to him, securely packed, as soon as it is finished." She handed Kenyon a card and a slip of blue paper. "I had brought that cheque with me, but if it is not right——"

"It is quite right, thank you."

She gave a last, long look at the picture, then dropped her veil over her face, thanked Kenyon again, and finally departed.

Kenyon went back to his easel, and the model came out and resumed her pose. But somehow the light and atmosphere—or perhaps the painter's mood—had changed. He was preoccupied and absent. The delicious problem of his colour scheme—pale terra cotta and golden green as a setting for youthful pink flesh and auburn hair—had ceased to promise a near solution. The splendid vision of the early morning had begun to fade into the inevitable light of common day. Yet he worked on conscientiously until the half-past twelve whistle announced the end of the sitting. Very promptly then he laid down his palette, nodded to the model, and began to clean his brushes, whistling pensively the while. By this time he had washed his hands and put on his coat and hat; the girl, too, was ready and they went out together.

"Dios mio! It is he!" she murmured.

On the days when the little Irishwoman sat to Kenyon—and these were frequent, for she was a favourite model (the head and hands and the draped figure)—the two were accustomed to lunch in company at a small French restaurant on—or, rather under—the dingy little square. This establishment consisted of a single basement room, low ceiled, and lit perpetually by sparse, unshaded gas-jets, which flared strongly at intervals, leaving the greater part of the place in darkness. But it was clean and cheap, had a

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reputation among the Bohemians of the quarter for old cheese, crusty bread, and fresh salads, and was accordingly frequented by many who might have afforded a more pretentious *ménage*.

Kenyon, habited to the place, had his special seat at a small table in a corner, where it was his pleasure, while imbibing the foaming beer or the mild red wines, to lie in wait for savage effects of light and shade, which he always thought he would utilise, but never did.

To-day he was in an unresponsive mood. He drank his hock and ate his bread and cheese, half listening to his companion's brisk chatter, putting in a word now and then, or smiling at some flash of her mischievous wit, but oftener ignoring her altogether. When he had finished his frugal meal, he fished out a short, black pipe from his inner pocket, and proceeded to add his quota to the coil of blue smoke that undulated along the ceiling. After a long silence, he said abruptly, shutting his teeth on the stem of his pipe:

"Bother the woman! I wish I knew where I've seen her!"

"Seen who? The lady in mourning, you mean? I'll tell you, if you like," said the girl readily.

"Pooh! You don't know her, do you?"

"Never saw her till I looked through the crack of the door this morning. But I'll bet I can tell where *you* saw her. On the stage."

"By jove! I believe you're right!" exclaimed Kenyon instantly. "I wonder," he added meditatively.

"Yes, a singer—or dancer. Retired, of course, and rich—probably married," she added, nodding her head sagely.

"Look here, Mamie, I'll tell you a story," began Kenyon, smiling whimsically. Then he stopped suddenly and said to himself, "No, I won't either. I'll tell it to *her*," and added, aloud, "some other day."

With that he got up unceremoniously, and after paying toll to fat Madame Lefebvre at the desk, went out, followed by the model's twinkling glance.

Perhaps it was the idea of Constance which drove Kenyon out of that tobacco and garlic-scented atmosphere away from the red-haired girl sitting with her elbows on the table and her narrow eyes blinking in the glare of the gas. In there it seemed somehow a profanation to think of her. He strolled on round the little square, pipe in mouth, his hat pulled down over his eyes and his hands plunged deep into the pockets of his loose overcoat. It was an unfashionable neighbourhood, and he attracted no more than a passing glance from the noisy children crowding the pavement. He noted abstractedly that the thin branches of the few lime-trees were studded with swelling buds, and that a faint green was suffusing the dusty plots where the fat sparrows wrangled; and recollected suddenly that the morrow would be Easter Sunday. A faint brooding smile lit his dreamy eyes as a radiant figure all in palest grey, grey-eyed and bright-haired, dawned on his inward vision. The incident of the morning had by this time quite faded from his mind. He was thinking now of the woman whom his love and reverence set apart from all other women. He was thinking that he was to see her that same afternoon.

He went back to his rooms, spent two hours over an edition of "Maurice de Guérin," which he was interleaving with drawings; then dressed and, stopping at a florist's on his way, started for Kensington.

* * * * *

The ladies were at home, the butler told him, and after a brief delay he was shown into the "morning-room," a small apartment separated from the library by Indian hangings, and opening into a miniature

He strolled on round the little square.

conservatory. The little nook, with its tempered light and soft blending of dull pinks and greens, had the air of an hothouse, and the slender girl on the divan among the gold cushions was like a lily grown under glass.

"But you are going out!" exclaimed Kenyon disappointedly, releasing her long, gloved fingers.

"Yes—to drive, and afterwards to a tea or two," said Constance, smiling. "Aunt Jem insists on my driving an hour every day—to bring back my colour, she says. As though I had ever had colour!"

"Then I won't repine," said Kenyon, taking a chair near her and dropping his violets in her lap, "for you certainly look paler than I like. Aren't you dissipating too much?"

"Dissipating—not much!"

"You know you're scarcely strong yet. If you don't look out you'll be packed off for another sea voyage."

Constance laughed and turned the question.

The acquaintance between these two was of little more than a year's duration, the latter three months of which time Constance had spent in Provence and Southern Spain. But before her sudden departure at the beginning of the season, this acquaintance had pro-

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gressed so far that there was—at least on Kenyon's side—no question of allowing it to drop, and it had been continued through those three months by letter. It may have been due to the interest and charm which Kenyon was able to infuse into his share of the correspondence that the two met again not as acquaintances, but as friends at least. For he wrote with his soul in his finger-tips, alive and alert to seek out that other soul to which all his hope addressed itself.

Almost from the very first meeting of all, he had acknowledged to himself—this philosophic dreamer of forty—that henceforth life held something for him beyond philosophy, or dreams, or love as he had known it, or, perhaps, art even, the master and crucible of all. She was so completely what a woman worth winning must be! Her patrician grace, her reserve, her youthful coldness, caprice even, seemed the entire fulfilment of an ideal which must always have lurked somewhere in his heart! He had never even wondered at his own swift and utter subjugation.

It was part of the scheme of things, and so, too, was the promise which had begun to shine for him in her serene eyes. The definite word had not yet been spoken. The lingering on the threshold had its charm, to Kenyon even.

Meantime his position in the house was perfectly assured, if not defined exactly. Mrs. Ferriss, the aunt with whom Constance lived, approved of him, both from the worldly and the personal point of view. Indeed, she had been known privately to declare that were it not for Mr. Ferriss she would have married him herself.

"You shall drive with us this afternoon, if you like," said Constance graciously, fastening the violets into the belt of her gown. "And you may as well go to the Caswells' tea, too. I hope you were intending to go? Just think of the dinners you've eaten in that house!"

"I know, but there won't be any more—dinners, I mean—till next season. However, I'll accept for the drive, with many thanks. And, by-the-way, when are you going to let me paint you in that gown? You promised, you know. And I've been dreaming of it. That grey, with the pink and lavender lights—it looks like a mist with a rainbow caught in it!"

"How poetical—if you could only paint your dream! You should have done it some time in Lent. You might have painted me in this Paris hat, and called the picture 'A Penitent!' But you must be too busy now. We haven't seen you for days. What have you been doing ever since—let me see—Thursday?"

"Oh, pegging away, as usual. I've been working hard on the 'Oread,' and it's coming—I think! Our exhibition opens in two weeks, you know, and I want that to go in. It's going to be the best thing I've done. The colour of the girl in her green gown—it's great!"

"Yes, I dare say. You painters all rave over red-haired girls. But what else shall you send?"

"Oh, a landscape or two—just to show those fellows that I *can* paint a landscape—and the portrait of Savary."

"Savary! I thought—I did not know you had that yet."

"Yes, for the present. I've been touching up some details a bit. I shall give it to the same gallery eventually, I think. It's the best thing I've done so far. You think so, don't you?"

"Well, I hardly know. I didn't see it after it was finished. It promised to be—very good, I remember."

"It has attracted a good deal of attention, principally, of course, because of Savary's sudden death, and because it's the only decent portrait of him. You remember the sensation his death made, don't you? Or was it just after you sailed? No, it was just before, I recollect now. Well, the portrait was nearly finished then; fortunately the figure was complete, or fairly so. People kept coming in and begging to see it. So I sent it to a little exhibition at the 'Paint and Clay,' unfinished as it was. But that was after you went away. I thought, though, that I had shown it to you since you came back!"

"I never saw it but once; no, twice. The first time, you remember, Aunt Jem and I came to the studio."

"I remember. You spoiled the sitting. Savary wouldn't keep his head in pose for looking at you. And then you went to the piano and sang something from *Carmen*, and Savary struck in with the Toreador's song, and then you sang some duet or the other. And I sat on the model throne and twiddled my thumbs. It was good music, though. What a voice he had!"

Constance laughed suddenly. "And I went to your studio again one day. You weren't there, but I made your boy let me in, and I went poking about among your things."

"You did! Well! He never told me!"

Kenyon regarded her with puzzled surprise. She took the violets from her belt and nervously pulled them apart.

"Yes. I always meant to tell you. It was a freak. And I saw the picture again. That was the last time."

There was a short silence.

"Speaking of Savary reminds me," began Kenyon; but paused there at the sibilant rustle of silken petticoats approaching.

"Dear Mr. Kenyon, so glad to see you! You are just in time to drive with us. No, do sit down again; there is no hurry—and don't let me interrupt you. You were talking about a pet enthusiasm of mine, weren't you, Constance, love? I mean Karl Savary. Mr. Kenyon, I had an immense admiration for that man—his voice, his beauty, his genius! His death was a great shock to me. You know he sang here on several of our Sunday evenings when he wouldn't sing at other houses for love or money. The last time was just a week before he died—think of it!"

Mrs. Ferriss sank gently into a chair and nodded her pretty head, crowned with the gayest of French bonnets.

"He was rather a favourite with your charming sex, I think," said Kenyon smoothly. "That is to say, behind the glitter of the footlights; or, perhaps, as the lion of a soirée—a lion with a well-kept mane and a most musical roar, certainly. For I don't suppose you knew him personally?"

"Oh, no, I don't mean that, of course. No doubt in private life he drank too much beer and ate unpleasant things, and was generally unromantic—poor fellow! I never talked with him, really, for he spoke very little English, you know—Constance got on better with him, I believe. But just to sit and look at him! And when he sang—who could be coldly rational with that voice fairly drawing the heart out of your breast——"

"Don't be absurd, Aunt Jem," said Constance rather sharply, decapitating violets.

"Constance, dear, you used to think so yourself. You were very fond of Herr Savary's singing."

"Was I?" said Constance coldly. "Mr. Kenyon,

you were saying something when Aunt Jem came in. Go on, please."

"Oh," said Kenyon, after a moment, "I remember. It was a rather curious little coincidence that occurred this morning; that is, one incident did. The other happened some time ago."

He went on to describe his visitor of the morning ending with:

"She appears now as a German baroness, but I am quite certain that I recollect her eight or ten years ago as a distinguished ornament of the burlesque stage. She was a Cuban, and a beautiful creature, too. No doubt her title and rank are genuine enough, for I indistinctly remember that she retired from the public eye at the zenith of her fame, and married an admirer who was said to be both rich and noble. Ease and prosperity haven't altogether agreed with her, though. She has lost her beauty. Some three months ago, just after Savary's death, I executed another commission of exactly the same sort—a small copy of this very picture—for a woman, too. Odd, isn't it?"

"Odd—it's fascinating! But, tell us, who was the other woman?"

"I don't know. I never saw her. A messenger boy brought me her note, written on the sort of paper and in the sort of hieroglyphic hand that most women—ladies, I mean—use nowadays. The note was unsigned and undated, and simply asked if I would make such a copy at once, on my own terms. I was to send a reply by the messenger, stating the earliest date when I could complete it. As it happened, I wasn't very busy just at that time, and I despatched an acceptance. A week later came another note in the same way, thanking me, enclosing—no, not a cheque, dear Mrs. Ferriss, but a packet of notes, and asking me to have the picture, when finished, put into an ebony frame, fitted with doors that could be locked. I sent an answer, promising to do so.

"Well, that is about all. I finished the picture. On the appointed day another messenger came and carried it away. And that was the end of it. Another of his flames, I fancy. I cannot understand why women should so humiliate themselves."

Constance was still tearing the violets to pieces and Mrs. Ferriss exclaimed softly:

"How mysterious! I should have tried to find out who she was. But are you sure it was a woman? Of course, though, it must have been. But why the locked doors, do you suppose? Altogether it is a real story—you ought to write it up and print it. I shall always look at your portrait now with a new interest. But it is odd that you never mentioned anything of this to us before, isn't it, Constance? And about you being with that poor young man in his illness, and when he died—he never told us of it, did he, Constance?"

"No, he never told us of it," echoed the girl.

She got up, dropping the violets from her lap, and crossed the room to the fireplace, where a small bed of coals smouldered dimly under a veil of grey ashes.

"And now we must really be going," said Mrs. Ferriss briskly, rising and drawing her velvet wrap about her shoulders.

"I'm afraid I've kept you ——," began Kenyon.

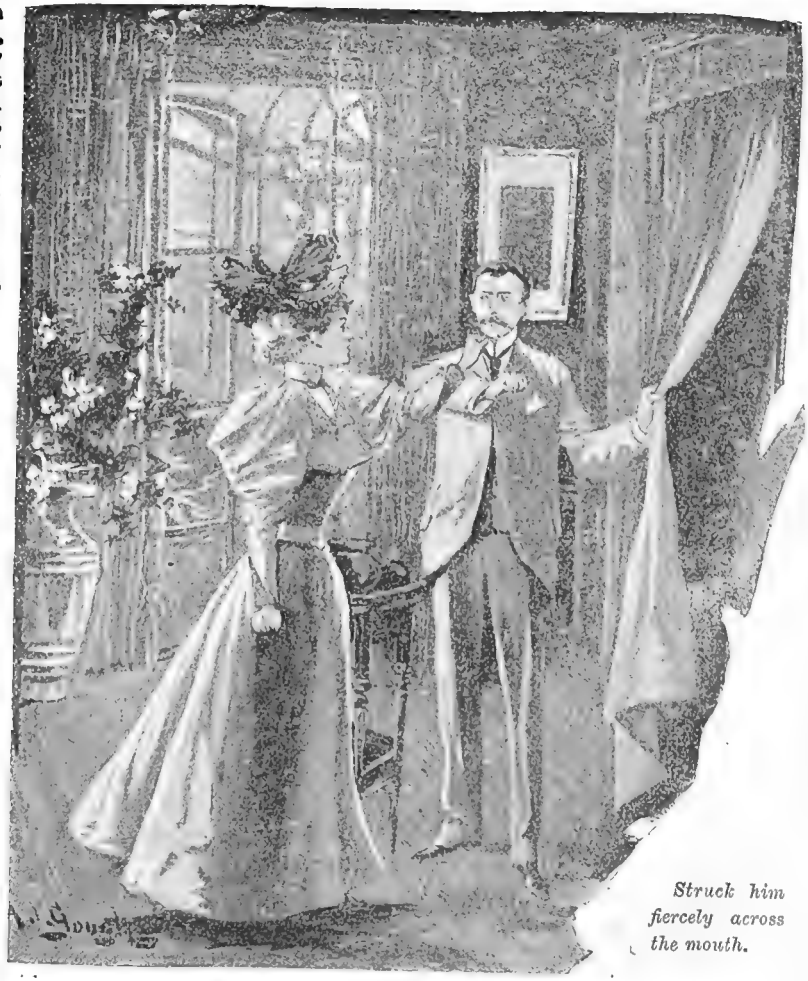
"Indeed you haven't. We are in plenty of time for our drive—a good long one, too, that ought to bring a little colour to this girl's pale cheeks."

Kenyon held the *portière* aside for her, and she called over her shoulder:

"Come, Constance!"

The girl, standing with her back to them, started imperceptibly. There was a little crash, and the fragments of a Sèvres cup tinkled on the tiles of the fireplace.

As she swept past Kenyon out of the room she struck him fiercely across the mouth.



Struck him fiercely across the mouth.

Leith Boyce.

THE PHANTOM OF BEN SEID.

MY uncle was a soldier, and feared nothing. My uncle was a philosopher, and believed nothing. He listened to priest and parson with equal disgust. He looked upon the church and chapel with equal contempt. He went beyond his school, he was not even a Bhuddist! I have said that my uncle believed nothing. The assertion is too broad; he believed in ruins. In search of them he travelled over Europe, at great expense and with immense discomforts.

In France he heard of an old Moorish castle in Southern Spain, which nobody had "done" in a hundred years. An Englishman had attempted it, but had succumbed for want of beef and surfeit of garlic, and had returned. A Frankfort Jew, in pursuit of an absconding debtor, had penetrated to within a league of it. The hospitable inhabitants had demanded that he should embrace the true religion. The misguided man had refused. He, also, had returned, but without ears! A Frenchman had thought to reach it. He had taken a guide across the mountains, and had not returned.

My uncle was delighted. He paid his bill; he ordered horses; he set out at once for Spain. At the frontiers he dismissed his horses, and took the national conveyance. In crossing the Pyrenees his animal made a false step on the edge of a precipice. As the mule fell out, my uncle fell in. The animal descended several hundred feet, and was broken to a jelly. His rider fell in a narrow path, and was but slightly bruised.

The muleteer, exasperated at the loss of his beast, discharged at my uncle a vituperative epithet. My uncle replied with a threat of the next Alcalde. The muleteer discharged his carbine; the bullet grazed my uncle's head. His reply to this is not recorded, but the next party found, sitting in the path, a muleteer, who had reported that an Inglees had shot him and stolen his mule. This party, being English, felt bound to make reparation. They gave the driver a thrashing and passed on.

My uncle, also, passed on, with as much haste as is possible in Spain, in the direction of Seville. There was no beef, the wine was poor, the bread bad, the chickens tough, the garlic detestable; but the eggs were the best in the world. He subsisted on the latter.

In as short a time as would be required for the grand pilgrimage to Mecca, he arrived at the passes of Seville. He stopped at a wretched inn, and asked for a guide. The innkeeper knew an excellent one. Indeed, he knew the prince of guides. He had conducted many over; he had never conducted any back. The prince of guides was brought. He smelled of garlic and looked villainous, which was natural. He was polite, and named a reasonable sum for his services, which was suspicious.

They set out at once. On entering the pass, my uncle asked to borrow his conductor's musket. The Spaniard declined to lend. My uncle held a pistol to his head, and he consented. Slinging the captured musket to the saddle of his mule, my uncle commanded the conductor to keep six paces to the front; and impressively informed him that if he were attacked from any quarter, he would move the finger pressing against the trigger of the pistol still pointed at his head. For the first time in his life the guide brought his charge in safety to the village across the mountains. For this he demanded extra compensation, and the Alcalde sustained the demand.

I have said that my uncle was a soldier. For all that, being also a philosopher, he preferred diplomacy to war. He had made his entry under unfavourable circumstances. He had been convicted of defrauding a poor robber of his dues. He was an object of suspicion; it was necessary to remove that suspicion.

He informed the Alcalde that he was more learned than the Chief Justice of Salamanca. He informed the Alcalde's fat daughter that she was more beautiful than the fair Florinda of Centa! Neither had ever heard of the illustrious personages to whom they were compared, but the compliment told the same. He represented to the priest that he had been sent by the Cardinal Archbishop of England, who had heard of the piety of the people of the valley and the grace and eloquence of their pastor, with a quantity of treasure for the repair of the church.

Indeed, that his only objection to being robbed had been on account of the loss to religion. His fine was remitted, and the sacrilegious guide driven from the village.

My uncle, happier than the Jew, had no faith to deny; he could, therefore, assume that of the people among whom he found himself, without compunction. He did not even deny his birthplace. He merely represented that England was the principal quarter of Rome, which everybody knew to be the seat of the true religion and a province of Spain. As soon as etiquette would allow, he inquired for the ruins of Ben Seid. Nobody had ever heard of them! My uncle had learnt experience that ruins as well as prophets are not held in honour in their own neighbourhood. He, therefore, engaged the housekeeper's best room at double price, and prepared to discover the Moorish Castle for himself.

It is necessary to go to church. Mass was said too early; he therefore attended vespers. Kneeling in the centre of the church was a lady in a black mantilla. Her form was graceful, her hair superb. My uncle passed along, and knelt beside her. She raised a hand, long and white, and put aside the veil which had concealed her features.

He was entranced. He had never seen such beauty in all his life. He was in love! He gazed upon her with rapture. She blushed and dropped her veil. When she left the place, he followed her. He came up with her at the outskirts of the village. He addressed her. He commenced: "Most beautiful, most adorable——" His foot slipped. He fell upon the ground. When he recovered she had disappeared.

He described her to his host; he did not know her. He described her to the Alcalde; he supposed she might be a gipsy from the mountains, and proposed to arrest her. He carelessly spoke of her, without dwelling on her beauty, to the Alcalde's daughter; she had never heard of her. He anxiously portrayed her to the priest; he had never seen her.

My uncle waited impatiently until the next evening. The lady did not appear. He attended every service for a week; he followed black mantillas, and peeped under long veils, until all the woman supposed him in love with them, and all the men were ready to poniard him. Still no lady.

He was in despair. He determined to fly from Spain and forget his love among the ruins of Tangier.

He hired a mule; he employed a guide; he was to leave the following morning.

Oppressed by baffled love and the smoke of villainous cigarettes, which his muleteer and guide were puffing in the *cabaret*, he went down the street until he came opposite the church; he crossed, entered, and walked up the aisle. Kneeling in the same place where he had seen her first was the lady of the black mantilla!

He picked his way cautiously among the prostrate worshippers until he came near her. At his approach she rose and left the building. Again he followed her. As he came up with her she quickened her pace. He kept beside her. She entered a dark mule path leading to the mountains. They came together into an open space where the moon shone full upon them. The lady stopped. My uncle stopped. She spoke; her voice was low and sweet, the exhalation of a generation of guitars. She said: "Why do you follow me, señor?"

"I love you," said he, "madly, passionately love you."

"It ill becomes a great soldier and a great *hidalgo*," said she, "to make sport of a poor unprotected lady."

"You know me?" said he.

"Who does not know," replied she, with enthusiasm, "the messenger of that most magnificent prelate, who, faithful to his trust, risked his most valuable life in the service of our holy religion?"

My uncle blushed. "But, alas!" continued she, "one may be brave in war and true to the faith, yet false in love."

"Not I!" exclaimed he. "I swear by all the saints that I am true—true in life, true in death!"

"And what would you have?" asked she.

"A word of hope!" exclaimed he; "a——" There came a loud halloo, and a clatter of hoofs down the path.

"Fly!" cried she in terror. "He is coming! He will slay you, he will slay us both!"

"Never!" said my uncle. "I am a soldier! I will protect and defend you."

"It is one against a host," whispered she; "if you love me, fly. Perhaps we may meet again!"

"Name the time and place," said he.

"Oh!" cried she, wringing her hands, "I cannot—I dare not!"

"I dare die with you!" said he firmly.

The jingle of spurs, the clash of swords, and the voices of men sounded close at hand.

"Fly!" cried she wildly; "or we both are undone!"

"Promise me——" began he.

"Anything," interrupted she, "only fly!"

"Meet me——"

"At the church of the Santa Dolorosa."

"When?"

"To-morrow, at midnight." And she glided away.

My uncle was in ecstasies. He was the happiest man in Spain. He returned home. The innkeeper presented his bill; it was extortionate, but my uncle paid it without a murmur. He dismissed the muleteer and guide, but not until he had paid them twice what they asked for conducting him on his journey. He retired, but not to sleep. He remembered that he did not know the situation of the place appointed for the meeting.

He rose at dawn. He paced the dirty courtyard an hour, waiting for the innkeeper to appear. He came at length, bearing some bundles of sticks.

"Where," demanded my uncle, "is the church of the Santa Dolorosa?"

The innkeeper dropped his faggots; he crossed himself; he called upon the Virgin; he ran crying into the house: "Here is a madman, inquiring for the Santa Dolorosa!"

The women set up a screaming, which raised the Alcalde, who lived next door. It raised the Alcalde's daughter, who screamed louder than the others on finding herself *en déshabille* under the gaze of the strange gentleman. Among them all they raised the village, men, women, dogs, and children.

It took an hour to explain that the strange gentleman wanted the Dolorosa. It took another to explain that nobody could tell why he shouldn't want her, except Manuel, the village orator.

It was still another hour before Manuel could be found. It was necessary for him to maintain his reputation. He seated himself upon the ground. His neighbours ranged themselves round. His voice was rich—his period magnificent. He narrated the history of Seville, and the exploits of Ferdinand and the Santa Isabella. He rehearsed innumerable legends, among them the following.

"At the time of the expulsion of the Moors'; there was a castle in the mountains of immense strength, and containing vast treasures. This castle was attacked by a great Christian captain, and taken, but not until its defenders were all slain.

"The victor, among other things, carried away the favourite slave of the infidel owner. She was of the most wondrous beauty, and her captain became greatly enamoured of her. Partly by force and partly by persuasion, he induced her to be baptised, and married her. She was not really converted, but in her heart still remained attached to her old faith, and true to the memory of her slain Moorish lord.

"The Christian captain had committed some sins in the course of his turbulent life which troubled him. He debated with himself whether to go on a pilgrimage or build a church. The former would take him from his wife, so he resolved upon the latter. The stones of the Moorish castle were at hand, and he owned the land by conquest. He therefore built his church among the infidel ruins.

"A church was nothing without a priest. He found the finest one in Seville, and installed him. The priest was young and without expression. He became smitten with his patron's wife. She encouraged him out of hatred to her husband and the true religion. The lord surprised them in the church. He slew them both, and their bodies fell across the altar. He fled, horror-struck, from the place of sacrilege, gave his estate to found a monastery, and went on a pilgrimage from which he never returned.

"The church of Santa Dolorosa went to ruin, but the site was still haunted by the Moorish lady and her para-

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mour, the priest. She was still engaged in the ruin of true believers. She was accustomed to select a man who had rendered some signal service to the church, seduce him by her blandishments, entice him to the Santa Dolorosa, and there induce him to marry her.

"At the conclusion of the rites, performed by the recreant priest, the victim would be set upon by a horde of Moorish fiends, in waiting, and immediately torn in pieces. It was said that her power would continue until she should, by mistake, entangle in her toils an infidel like herself."

My uncle understood nothing of this harangue, except that the church of the Santa Dolorosa was the same as the castle of Ben Seid which he had come to find. He impatiently asked Manuel to conduct him thither. The saints forbade that the orator should know the situation of such a heathen nest. The saints forbade that anybody should know where it was.

My uncle was in a fury. He raved; he threatened; he entreated. The village was in a tumult. At length it was remembered that the shepherd Miguel had come across the church once in searching for his sheep.

Miguel thought he could find the place again. The distance was long; he must be well paid. My uncle expected to pay. It was also at the peril of his soul. My uncle was willing to pay for that, too. Then, the saints willing, he would set out the next day after to-morrow!

They set out, and travelled a long distance. It grew dark. Miguel declared he must return. His cattle were suffering for him. It was evident he dared not approach the Dolorosa by night. He gave my uncle directions for finding the ruins, which he said were but half a league distant, and left him.

My uncle had time to review the situation. He was in a strange part of a strange country. He was not certain but that his guide had misled him. It was possible that he was the victim of a plot. Perhaps he had been decoyed into this lonely place for the purpose of robbery or even murder. Perhaps his inamorata had—at the thought of her, his doubts forsook him. "She is beautiful!" said he. "She is good! She is true!"

He pressed on with alacrity in the direction pointed out by Miguel. His way lay up a ravine, where there flowed a mountain stream. The moon had risen, and threw strange shadows across his path from the rocks that lined the gorge. He shrank back to allow a long line of ghostly friars to pass him! He started at an apparition of armed men across his road!

"I am nervous," said he; and he took a copious draught from his hunting-flask. He walked forward, whistling the air of a wild song.

The time passed rapidly. He drew out his watch; it wanted a quarter to twelve! He must have come a league—nay, he must have come several leagues! He had lost his way! It was as safe to go forward as back. He drank again from his flask, and went on.

Directly he found himself on a small tongue of land, overhung by a dark mountain, and before him, beautiful in the moonlight, rose a group of palm-like Moorish columns. He paused, and for a moment, as he gazed on the stately pillars, their spandrels pierced in gossamer lace-work, the horseshoe-shaped corridors with their wealth, the mosaic decoration, and the gilded roof of Phœnician-like carpentry, starred as a heaven, though broken and defaced, still showing the gorgeous imagination of the Saracen, the exultation of the antiquary overcame every other emotion, and he felt that his toils and dangers were amply compensated by this view of the ruins of Ben Seid.

He was aroused from his contemplation by a rustle at his side, and, turning round, saw the beautiful lady of the black mantilla.

"There is no time to lose," whispered she; "the priest is waiting."

My uncle started. "What priest?" said he.

"Alas!" said she, bursting into tears; "I have thrown aside the delicacy of my sex at the promptings of love, and you despise me."

"What do you mean?" said my uncle.

"I have come," replied she, "to the church of Santa Dolorosa under the protection of a few old servants of my ruined house, and accompanied by a simple priest, who, for favours long since received, has remained my faithful friend, to be united according to the rites of our holy religion with the bravest soldier."

Her feelings overpowered her; she sank sobbing on the ground.

My uncle was in love. He was excited with brandy and the novelty of his situation. He had heard of the ardour of Spanish maidens. He seized the lady by the hand; he raised her up; he protested his devotion; he declared his willingness to follow her anywhere; to do anything she wished.

She conducted him to a part of the edifice in a better state of preservation than the rest and through an arched doorway into a large room only lighted by the moonbeams streaming through the crevices in the walls. At the upper end of this room he could distinguish a knot of persons, and among them the figure of a priest. As they advanced the room seemed filled with shadows wavering in the wind. Then came a sound of music, low and monotonous at first, but bursting out at length into a wild wail.

The lady paused and whispered: "Our marriage hymn."

The priest came forward and said, in a mournful voice: "My son, before entering upon this solemn undertaking, it is necessary that one should confess sins and receive absolution."

A sense of his position flashed across my uncle's mind. The deception in regard to his religion could be kept up no longer. He turned to his companion and said: "I was not educated in the Catholic faith; I am open to conviction; no doubt I shall come to see the truth."

"Who and what are you?" interrupted she in a hoarse whisper.

The shadowy forms grew but more distinct, and seemed pressing forward to hear his answer. The priest shook beneath his cowl!

"I am an Englishman," said my uncle; "I am of no religion."

The lady gave a wild shriek. The shadows were fierce, bearded men, their turbans tossing, and their scimitars flashing in the moonlight. The columns bowed; the building swayed; the floor seemed falling into an abyss.

When my uncle came to himself it was broad daylight. The sun was shining through the broken windows and the birds were singing their morning songs. He held something clasped in his hand. He looked down; it was the skeleton of a lady's hand! The fingers long and taper, and covered with rich jewels! He threw it from him with disgust. For the first time in his life he breathed a prayer. He rose and hurried from the place. He returned to the inn; he recalled his guide; he took his way to the nearest port, and left Spain for ever.

JULES MACDONALD.

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LUCIE'S REVENGE.

"Lucie, you are going too far; I tell you I will not have——"

"*You* will not!"

"You do not wait to hear what I am saying. Yes, I will not have this Englishman dance with you so often. People talk, Lucie. He only comes when you are here—only dances with you; and he looks—ah! how he looks!—as if he had only to command and you——"

Lucie crimsoned. "What do you know of how a gentleman should look? He admires me. He has taste," she replied with impudent frankness, that her pretty face and dainty figure fully justified. "And if he is handsome, am I, then, only to dance with the old and the ugly? 'He looks—ah! how he looks!'" she repeated mockingly. "Not on the ground" (Anatole raised his head and flushed), "but in my eyes, as a man should. He is not afraid to speak—to touch me, and so people talk and you are jealous. You are a fool."

She was so busy with the rose—already half dead—and Anatole's senses were so deadened by misery that neither heard the soft foot-fall that had approached the arbour, or saw the man who had paused before them. As Lucie ceased he spoke: "Our waltz, M'mselle."

They both looked up, and Anatole, seeing the suspicion of a smile on the clean-shaven face, wondered if the intruder had heard. Lucie, caring nothing, laughed, and smiled at him coquettishly as she took his proffered arm. The two men gazed curiously at each other for a second, and then, with the faintest of bows, the Englishman led his partner away into the ball-room.

Anatole remained, staring after them but seeing nothing. Ever since the evening his handsome rival had first seen Lucie at the Moulin Rouge, he feared for the result, and against the lover who is not bold Fate plays with loaded dice. He grew dull and self-conscious—doubtful of himself when most he needed to appear at advantage. So, very quickly his sweetheart became impatient, scornful, even ashamed of her lover, and every time they met the Englishman at the public ball-room Anatole seemed more his foil than ever.

It was useless to try and persuade Lucie not to go to the place again, the attempt would only have resulted in a shower of jests and ridicule more stinging than her sneers. Therefore he had been silent till now—and now he had quarrelled with her, and had seen her carried off in triumph.

At last he roused himself and, leaving the almost deserted grounds, entered the room and seated himself at one of the little tables to wait till the dancing was over.

The merry music, the swing of the dancers, the mirth, the glitter of light on gilding and glass, the gleam of white arms and shoulders—all that makes the Moulin Rouge attractive, merely mocked him, for he could see Lucie in the arms of his rival, laughing, chattering—and worse, listening.

He called for brandy; drank glass after glass. But it did not deaden the pain he felt; it only confused his senses, and made everything appear a hopeless tangle. The last dance drew to an end, and he made his way across to Lucie. She was standing with the Englishman, and he was looking down at her flushed face and laughing blue eyes with an air of possession that was maddening.

Anatole walked over to them slowly, for he knew the unusual drinking was taking effect.

"Lucie, you are coming home?" he asked.

She looked at his glazing eyes, and heavy, heated face with disgust, and then, glancing up at her partner, she met his scornful smile, and bit her lip.

"I am going home," she replied.

But the half-drunken man did not notice the intimation her answer conveyed.

"Come, then," he said, roughly pushing his way between her and the Englishman. But she drew to one side and turned to the latter.

"Will you give me your arm, monsieur?"

The white rose fell from her dress, unnoticed, except by Anatole, and as she passed out of the hall she left it lying in the dust of the floor.

That night she did not go home to her little apartment, and from that day she was seen no more at her usual place in the florist's in the Rue du Bac. Anatole was like a man insane; he could not work, but spent his days in the wine-shop, and his nights wandering about the streets when he was not sleeping off the effects of his drinking bouts. He rapidly went from bad to worse, as still no news came of Lucie or the Englishman.

Months passed, each spent in a series of mad orgies; his savings of years were gradually being spent to keep

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up the dreadful madness that deprived him of power to think of the past. It was killing him, quickly and surely.

One night he reached his lodgings in his usual condition, and, staggering up the stairs, threw open the door of his room and stumbled in. There was little light in the apartment, only the glimmer which came from the lamps below in the street. He threw his cap on the ground and lurched towards the bed.

"Anatole."

He swung round and grasped the bed-post to keep himself from falling. A woman's figure had risen from a chair and was standing facing him. For a moment he thought he had gone mad at last; that misery and his reckless attempts to drown it had turned his brain. It was Lucie. The shock sobered him somewhat.

"What are you doing here?" he cried, and though he strove to make his voice firm, there was an eager tremor in it.

"I have come back to you," she replied.

"And he——?"

"Has left me—is going to marry." And then she broke into a storm of fury and rage. "To marry—you hear? And he swore undying love to me and I believed him; and now—now. Oh! but I will be revenged on him, the traitor, the liar. To marry—left me—*me*—and I—I have come to you, for you will help me to my revenge."

"I? Do you forget the last night at the Moulin Rouge? I help you?"

"Yes—you. You drove me to it, Anatole, with your preaching and your jealousy and your drinking. But you hate this man—you must hate him."

She was right; her words had redoubled his hatred of the Englishman, and in his whirling, half-maddened brain were growing schemes of vengeance.

"You still love him," he cried hoarsely.

"Love! What has love to do with it," she replied fiercely. "And if I do? No, no, I hate him. I could see him dead at my feet and spurn him—so! Love! He has killed love!"

"And you want revenge. Listen; will you swear to marry me if I——"

"Yes, yes, if you——"

"Kill him."

"Kill! No—no," and she shrank back; "not that—not that."

"So you do love him?"

There was no answer, and he went on: "But you would be revenged. How, if he is not to die?"

"I do not know—frighten him—make him afraid to marry this girl."

Anatole laughed scornfully. "Frighten him! Is he a child then? Bah! a woman's plan—a foolish—but—but yes, why not, Santina? You remember last year how Santina killed the traitors to the 'Fils de l'Anarchie'?"

"Yes."

"Then why not——"

"Ah, yes, yes! That is it. But not to kill; you promise me? A glorious revenge—to make him suffer all the agonies of death, and still live to think of it."

Her eyes flashed. A true Parisian of the working class, she loved anything with a touch of melodrama in it—and would not this be dramatic?

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Anatole saw in her vengeful, delighted face no love for him, but what did that matter? She would be his, and the thought after such months of despair, made his brain swim, and sent the blood rushing, hot, through his veins.

* * * *

Lucie was waiting in the Faubourg St. Martin, full of feverish impatience. Past four o'clock, and she saw no sign of the man whom she had come to meet. She was trembling with excitement. She made no attempt to analyse her feelings; had she done so, she would have found Love, Hate, and an instinct that evil would come of this plot, struggling in her breast, and producing emotions that were almost too great for her to bear.

Would he come? She hoped for, and yet dreaded his coming.

At length she turned back in the direction of the Boulevard de la Villette; she could bear the suspense no longer. But she had scarcely gone a dozen yards before she felt a light touch on her shoulder and the well-known English accent fell on her ear—"Lucie."

She turned with a start. "I could not be here sooner," said the Englishman hurriedly; "now what do you want? But we can't talk here, I—I may be seen," and a slight colour rose to his forehead.

The girl let the words pass unnoticed. "Will you come with me to my room?" she asked.

"Yes, but make haste."

She led him down the Rue Dunkerque, and through a multitude of little streets, dirty and dingy. "Where are you taking me?" he asked, as they traversed a narrow lane even filthier than the rest.

"To my apartment," she responded. "You shudder! Well, what can I do? I live where I can afford now."

"But I gave you money, Lucie."

"Yes, only when that is gone what shall I do? I must do as I can and be careful of what I have."

He made no further remark. At length they paused before a dingy *hôtel meublé*, and Lucie entered. The man stood for a moment hesitating and looking up at the dirty, broken *lanterne*, and at the wall of the house, trisected by two great cracks and covered with dirt over the whitewash. Then he lowered his eyes to Lucie, who stood waiting, and with a gesture of disgust followed her up the narrow, ill-lit stairs—up to the very garret. On the top landing she paused and looked down at him as he toiled up, breathing heavily with the unwonted exertion.

"You live near enough the sky," he grumbled.

She could not trust herself to reply, but opened the

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door of her room. At the top of the stairs the Englishman stopped to breathe and wipe his forehead. Every delay was agony to the girl, who stood nerving herself for the moment he should pass the doorway. At last he entered.

"Now, my girl, what is——" But the remaining words died away in a muffled murmur beneath the shawl Lucie flung over his head. He tried to free himself, but Anatole's strong arms were round him, forcing him down into a chair. He felt something tighten round his arms and shoulders. He struggled, but found his efforts useless, and he was compelled to sit quiet while the rope was knotted round him, and a rough gag thrust into his mouth.

Then they freed his head from the hot, suffocating folds of the shawl, and he gazed round. Lucie, pale, panting, half frightened, leant against the door, but opposite him, at the other side of the table, stood Anatole, with a malignant smile on his face.

"It is my turn now," he said. "Monsieur cannot have all the fortune. It is not always safe to take a man's sweetheart away and then cast her off. But yet it is a thousand pities; monsieur has a handsome face; eh?"

The girl's face clouded.

"It is almost a sin to disfigure it, and yet it must be so," Anatole continued.

He walked across to a cupboard, took out a small parcel, and opened it slowly on the table.

"Monsieur remembers the trial of Santina, guillotined for the murder of traitors to the anarchists?

"He does, I see, for he blanches and whitens. Santina's clocks were magnificent and this is one like them. See the little pistol muzzle just showing like a black hole in the face! That is all, and yet when the clock is set from that hole at the appointed hour comes a bullet and death to anyone in its path. See, I place it here. Alas! that handsome face. And now—at six! Monsieur has one hour—barely that—to live, and Lucie and I one hour to get away. We are going to be happy, Lucie and I, and the little 'ping' of the bullet will be our blessing. But fifty minutes now. It will soon be over, only—fifty minutes is a long time to look death in the face. The time passes much quicker at the Moulin Rouge. Come, Lucie."

The prisoner made a mute appeal with his eyes, and the girl paused, but Anatole caught her in his arms, and half carried her from the room. The door shut, the lock fastened with a snap, and the Englishman was left alone with the clock ticking away the remaining minutes.

Half-way down the stairs, Lucie paused, as if in doubt. "You are sure it is harmless?" she asked Anatole, looking into his face searchingly.

"There is nothing but the works in the clock, and a hole cut in the dial. What harm can come of that?"

Still she hesitated. Neither spoke, but both were wavering. Anatole roused himself with an effort.

"To-morrow he marries," he muttered.

Lucie turned as if stung, and resolutely began to descend the stairs.

"And to-night he shall suffer," she said.

A quarter—half-an-hour passed, and above there was silence. Three-quarters—and footsteps and hushed voices sounded from below, and came up the stairs. Lucie was trembling. Anatole as pale as she.

Three minutes to six—they paused outside the door and listened, heard a faint sound within of heavy breathing. Two minutes—one—a slight whizz, and then the little bell struck six. The listeners breathed a sigh of relief, and Anatole flung open the door.

The Englishman's head had fallen on his breast and was slightly moving. The heavy breathing has ceased. "He has fainted!" cried Anatole. "Some water, Lucie."

They bent over him and bathed his face and hands; there was no sign of consciousness. Tremblingly Anatole began to untie the ropes; they were tied tightly and he hurriedly took out his clasp knife and cut them. The body swayed to one side, leaning a dead weight on Lucie's shoulder, and she screamed at the touch. They raised it between them and laid it on the table in fear and dread. They clasped the hands and bathed the head again. At length they ceased. Lucie caught her breath with a gasp and instinctively Anatole crossed himself. With eyes of horror and mutual accusation, they stared at each other across the corpse. Lucie stooped and fearfully pressed her lips to the dead man's—they were still warm. It seemed as if he slept, and she kissed him again and again. Then she silently moved to the door. Anatole was standing in the way and she drew to one side that she might not touch him, and passed with a shudder.

He stood for a moment white as the dead body, his face set and haggard and his eyes dull and hopeless.

He looked down at the silent form on the table.

"All—all," he murmured; "her love—and still her love—her memory even—then this too," and he drew from the breast of his blouse a handful of faded, brown rose leaves, that had once been white, and scattering them in a little shower over the body, he turned and slowly left the apartment.

HONOR LUCELLE.

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Short Stories

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Or, THE ROMANCE OF A LOST CONTINENT.

By GEO. C. WALLIS, Author of *"The Winning of Gunhild,"* etc.

CHAPTER XXI.

TRIAL AND SENTENCE.

I LAY quite still when I awoke, looking up into the yet dim air with wondering eyes and a strange feeling of peace and restfulness. Nor could I, for a while, gather my senses to know where I was. Conscious only of calm and rest, I lay and looked up vaguely curious at the red shafts of light creeping over the edges of the walls of darkness that rose above in shadowy massiveness, at the few gaunt cedars that projected over the sky line, at the alternating redness and whiteness of the opposite cliff where the sun shone down, and at the birds of prey that circled overhead now and again swooping, with hoarse cry and rustle of wings, into the gulf below.

Gradually, as I gazed, the light grew stronger, revealing plainly the well-known chasm and throwing the shadows of its angles into deeper black by contrast, and gradually the remembrance of how and wherefore I was there dawned on me.

I started up, but a pain, sharp as a knife and heavy as a load of lead upon my back, caused me to lie down again with an involuntary moan. Something glittering by my side had caught my eyes in that brief space of time, and turning so that I could face it, though with great labour and agony, I saw my cherished sword, my "Sunderer," my mute but steadfast friend, my saviour in a dozen fights, the sharer in my measure of renown; and stretching out my hand I grasped its dear, familiar hilt, the touch seeming to put new life and new curiosity into me, new impatience to be up and doing.

"Ha! my voiceless comrade!" I said to the shining shaft of steel, "now thou art come back to me I feel that we shall yet do much together, as of old."

"Hist! he is awake! You shall speak to him first, Valdo," I heard a voice say, and then the speaker came between me and the daylight, and I saw my trusty follower standing near my feet.

"Art rested now?" asked Valdo, bending down.

"Yes, but cannot rise because of my wound," I answered. "Canst tell me how long I have slept?"

"Nigh on three days, Captain, and soundly, too, I'll swear, since we have dressed the cut in your back twice each day and thou didst not know it! But it seems thou hast found your famous sword."

"How came it here, after falling into the river?" I asked, my mind blundering over memory's dark places.

"Valdo brought it up for thee," said Atris, coming forward, "and the others held the rope he went down by and pulled him up again."

"Thou dost see, Captain, thou had'st done ill to part with us at any time," put in Valdo, "and we would fain thou promised to keep us in thy service ever."

"I promise you with all my heart," I said, looking at the brave, devoted couple. "Next to a woman's love is the love I bear you twain, and, please the gods, you shall ever be my comrades."

"Such friendship is better than a woman's love," growled Valdo, more, I think, to hide his feelings than for any other wish.

"Nay," said Atris, "thou hast never had an Izitla to cherish, or would talk otherwise."

"Go to!" the other answered. "And now, Captain," he said to me, "had we not better stay here till thy hurt is healed? It will cure slowly if thou hast rest, for nothing vital is injured—which is a marvel—and these cliff-dwellers, though barbarians, are a kindly race, and well-disposed to us."

"We will stay," I said, "though it goes against the grain to lie here on one's back when the Queen awaits my return with anxious eyes. Yet I will wait, for it will surely be the speediest in the end."

"Art wise," said Valdo; "but had thou not wished to stay I would have made thee, if I had to tie thee to a tree to do it!" with which gruff expression of goodwill on his part the pair retired to bring me food and drink.

I watched them walk away, and a misty moisture dimmed my eyes. Verily, I was favoured of the spirits in my manhood's prime to have given to me two such faithful friends and a sweetheart Queen; surely I should be recompensed now for the sorrows and sorrow-born sins of my youth. Surely the pattern of the Universe, that is woven in woe here and mirth there, in evil here and goodness there, in ways that pass our understanding, is too mazy a pattern for we mortals to follow out, or even to trace, though never so faintly, the shape of its boldest outlines?

Thirty days we stopped amongst those hospitable cliff-dwellers, sharing the shelter of their cedar-wood houses and their towns of solid masonry; seeing their hoards of treasure secreted in massive houses, built up to and into the rock, of large boulders laid firmly and squarely in sun-dried clay; eating the strange, sweet roots that grew in nooks and crannies on the face of the mighty cliffs; admiring their goodly store of richly coloured pottery, in the shaping of which these savages excel, and never ceasing to wonder at the cat-like ease and quickness with which these dusky dwellers in semi-darkness climbed up and down their frail ladders and rude footways, and ran along their dizzy paths where a slip meant death. And then, my wound being so far healed that I could walk, though still with difficulty, we said farewell to our generous friends, and

taking the captive governor with us, set out on our long homeward journey.

Although we went more slowly than we came, we found it easier, since we knew our way without hesitation through the grim, iron-bound deserts of the land of ravines, over the level plain between it and the mountainous region, through that howling wilderness of snowy summits and frowning, craggy heights, and on till we came to the great chasm spanned by the tree-bridge, and where we had left 900 men.

They were still there, not having courage either to cross the barrier or to disobey my orders and retreat to the coast, but sorely tempted to do the latter, and on the point of mutiny against their officers.

Paying no heed to their troubles, or to their surprise at seeing us return with Quitzaal, I crossed the suspended trunks, Valdo and Atris coming next, bearing the governor, bound, between them, and the other twenty odd close behind, and making the passage without accident, gave the word to make tracks as swiftly as possible to the sea-shore. I began to long with a consuming desire to clasp my Briseis in my arms and claim my reward, now that I had fulfilled the task set and freed her realm from rebels and enemies.

Without delay we kept on until we came to the valley where the great battle had been fought, and passing by the huge brick pyramid—sole relic, like its former fellows scattered up and down the land, of four hundred years of Atlantian rule—we struck the path of our former march, and, following it, climbed out of the oval basin, across the tableland to the east, and thence descended the seaward slope, through all its gradations of climate from keenest winter to fiercest summer, until, emerging from the forest of the foot-hills, we came to the sandy shore, where the *Ravager* and a score of warships rode idly at anchor.

Orlanis and his sailors greeted us with ringing cheers of joy, for they had thought us lost and were on the verge of despair; and so, without ceremony, dragged us aboard, weighed anchors, and stood out for the eastward in a frenzy of delight. They longed, as I did, to once more reach Atlantis, and I smiled quietly to myself to see the marvellous skill and speed with which the homesick sailors shook out the fluttering sails and loosed the ropes and urged the rowers to their work and cleared the decks for any sort of weather.

And as I smiled I cheered them on, for my heart, too, was in their work, for every rippling wave we touched and overtook was a step nearer to our voyage end. But the Spirit of the Storm, who is one of the lesser gods, has neither care nor thought for human hopes or wishes, and caught our little fleet in a tempest ere we were a day out from the silent shores of Ulmeca.

It was not so strong a gale as I have known, but it blew as though it would never cease in one long roaring blast of wind and spray, coming always from the N.N.E., and keeping our deck swept clear of everything that was not lashed down, for a couple of weeks. The other ships scattered hither and thither before its fury, some foundering, others striving might and main to make headway against the hurricane, and others, like the *Ravager*, flying before it under bare spars and with rigid helm.

Of all the twenty vessels, only six besides my own got back to Atlantis, the others perishing in the storm.

Soon, as we sped onward under the mad impulse of the tempest's breath, we lost sight of all our consorts, and alone on the heaving sea the *Ravager* cut her way with daring eagerness through the pitching and tossing rollers that thundered ever in impotent fury in the front of her sharp-curved prow.

I stood by the helm, of all on board the least troubled, for the song of the sea was in my ears again, and recalled to me those careless, joyous pirate days, when, on the self-same staunch and sturdy craft, I had braved the rigor of a hundred gales, and, alone on the boundless blue, had laughed in the teeth of the fiercest storm that ever lashed the waters into reckless rage.

Yet two sennights of such storm-stress as this was not to my liking, and I welcomed as heartily as the others, when it came, the abating of the tempest and the clearing of the leaden-hued sky.

We had been borne back into the vast gulf of islands to the south of Ulmeca by then, and only managed to hoist a sail and get our ship under command again, when we sighted the dangerous rock that guards the landward passage.

It is a huge stone rising solitary from the water like a sentinel,* and round its stony base the sea lashes ever with a booming roar. As we drew near I noticed a clump of fig trees growing on the single strip of sand, and taking a boat I set off to bring a store of the fruit on board.

At first I gave up the attempt to land there, but finding no other spot where it was possible to get ashore, I made the venture, and though we had to creep on all fours through the boiling surf, where the reef ran into the sea, we at last reached the grove of green, wild fig-trees, and plucked a considerable quantity of the luscious fruit.

Wandering on through the grove, I found that it led up the high rock that towered above the water as high as the height of a hundred full-sized men, to a small cavern, wind-swept and bare, but said nothing of my discovery to the rest.

Then, conveying our loads with difficulty, we crept out to the boats, pulled back to the ship, and set her prow to the eastward, urging her forward by wind and oar as fast as both could hurry her, and, this time favoured by the elements, came duly in sight of the well-loved shores of Atlantis, having been absent for nigh upon a year.

Every soul on board the weather-beaten *Ravager* crowded on her deck at sight of the longed-for land, and right lustily they cheered as the well-known coast burst upon their view. Eagerly they signalled to the wondering people, who flocked to the shore as our ship glided past, and to the fisher-boats we overtook as we got nearer to the capital; and loud and strong rose the wild sweet notes of the Ina-Ana, as the *Ravager*, with Arnon the General at her helm, leading the chorus of the song, swept foaming through the waves into the Bay of Kronos, her oars beating the water with regular strokes, her sails spread full and taut, and the war-torn but triumphant flag of gold, with the sun of fire blazing on it, flying bravely from her mainmast top!

The Magnificent City was all a tumult on the instant we were sighted, and when we had got clear through the fleet of vessels in the harbour, and let down our anchors at the side of the stone pier, it was only by dint of stern appeals and lusty elbowings that we got foot on it, until a troop of soldiers came down and opened us a way to the palace, whither Valdo and Atris with myself and our prisoner repaired at once through the streets lined with the cheering populace.

Near the gates of the Royal abode we were met by Marenso and a company of the guard of honour, and by them ushered through the marble halls to the Audience Chamber, where the Queen awaited us on the Silver Throne amid a motley multitude of fawning courtiers and a bevy of fair ladies of rank and wealth.

Now I thought that the portals of the Gardens of Pleasure were once more open to me, as plaudits and shoutings arose on every hand and I was named by all as the saviour of my country and her greatest son, and most of all because my Briseis thanked me with her sweet, soft voice, giving me her royal hand to kiss before the concentrated gaze of that mighty throng.

"I had begun to fear for thy safety, Arnon," said she, "when Marenso returned without thee, and told of the scanty force left for pursuit of the rebel leader. But now thou art returned I am content."

"I came not because I had not then fulfilled my vow," I answered, looking into her dear face with gladdened eyes,

* The Diamond Rock.

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"and having now fulfilled it, here I am. Saving the Governor Quitzaal, whom I have here, and the Princess of Aidè, whom Marenso brought to thee, I know of no enemies to thy throne in all the land."

"Thou hast done well and nobly," the Queen replied, "and art worthy the boon thou once asked, which shall be nameless here. What seemeth best to thee that I do to these prisoners? for it were well that they be settled with at once, nor cause further trouble."

"In thy hands it rests, my Queen," I said, "though I would urge that the two be heard in their defence. For my part, I would not trust myself to judge."

"Bring in the Princess Listra," said Briseis, "and the rebel captives shall both be sentenced here, while this company is assembled. Thou, Arnon, and thy two officers, with Marenso and the priest Unim, take your place at my right hand. The culprits shall be put on the left. Hasten, varlets, and bring them forward!"

The soldiers advanced as desired, leading Quitzaal and the Princess—who had been kept in the palace since her arrival—to the foot of the throne on the left, and clearing a space round them with drawn swords. Neolyn, the

The soldiers advanced as desired.

guardian of the written law and the priest of the Spirit of Life, was the first to speak indicting the sullen twain.

He read the list of penalties that wait on those who defy the Sovereign and take up arms in treachery, and, concluding, said:

"And ye two who have added treachery to rebellion and stubbornness to both, who have sought to possess yourselves of the Queen's land and have wounded and slain her loyal subjects, who have caused the cities and towns of Atlantis to be laid in ruins, and have lost to her her province in the west; ye two are doomed to death by the sacred laws, unless the Sovereign who reigneth, after taking due counsel from the ministers of state, should otherwise decree. So runneth the writ."

The Queen would have spoken then, but the Princess, looking fair as ever she had done, and reckless withal, turned to her, disdainful and contemptuous.

"I ask no other decree, my fair, mild Queen, who hath not the heart of a sparrow, than that the writ be carried out," she said defiantly. "I have dared great things and I have lost, but I can die with a fearless face."

"Silence!" thundered Neolyn, "nor speak until thou art asked. The Queen shall say which of the prisoners shall speak first."

"I would hear Quitzaal, of whom I once thought better things," said Briseis.

"Then say on, captive," said the Priest of Life.

"I can only plead for the mercy of a merciful Queen," said Quitzaal, "for there is little excuse for my disloyalty. Yet I would ask one thing, if I may."

"Ask what thou wilt," granted Briseis.

"I would ask if thou, my sovereign, sent Vichri, thy cousin, to Ulmeca, with intent to put him in my place as governor, and send me home disgraced? For so he told me."

"'Twas a foul falsehood!" cried Briseis, her cheeks flushing with anger. "'Twas he I sent from here in disgrace because of his evilness to Arnon. But 'twas like him, who knew not how to do a good deed."

"Then that, in some part, must plead for me," said the ex-Governor; "for though I was hard pressed by the barbarians and might have gone over to them in rebellion, I had never, without Vichri's lying words, sent my fleets and armies into Atlantis, nor allowed the Prince of Aidè to raise his province in revolt. In so far as I am guilty let me be punished, but in so far as I was deceived let my sentence be mitigated. Thus much, O Queen, I entreat," and the tall, bearded man fell on his knees before the throne in supplication, though with a quiet dignity that became him well.

"What say you, my councillors?" asked Briseis.

"That 'tis not wise to show any leniency to so dangerous a man," returned Neolyn coldly.

"That 'twere a matter of great risk so to do," said I, "having regard to the future."

"Which I fear also," said Atris.

"I would say, consult thine own mind, Queen, and trust its promptings," urged Unim, "and rest assured that exile will be punishment enough."

"Let him die as the law injuncts," said Valdo gruffly, "and there will be an end of him."

"Take the lying words of Vichri into account, O Queen," said Marenso, "and fear not to be merciful."

"'Tis hard to judge from such contrary counsel," said Briseis, "but the Sleeper and Unim seem to me to speak the best, and, therefore, I sentence thee, Quitzaal, who was once the Governor of Ulmeca, to be exiled in that land, amongst its barbarians, for twenty years from this day, and if before that time thou dost set your foot on my shore, the law shall take its judgment on thee. Away! I will no thanks."

So the soldiers took him out amid murmurs of applause at the fair Queen's gentleness, and catching sight of his face as he went, I felt that there was no more to fear from him. Then Neolyn turned to the Princess Listra, asking if she had ought to say against the carrying out of the sentence upon herself.

"Naught!" she answered with a superb air of scorn, her eyes flashing and her figure drawn up to its full height. "Naught from she who has conquered. Kill me, mild and virtuous Queen, so that—as the gruff soldiers said of Quitzaal, the craven, the humble—there may be an end of me! Slay me as in thy heart of hearts thou longest, my rival, for having held thy love, thy Arnon, in my spell and made him forget thee. Slay me, I say, because my kisses have burned upon his faithless lips, my arms have clasped his stalwart form—him thou wouldst make thy king! Call me wanton, fickle, rebel, if thou wilt; 'tis the privilege of the victress, but forget not, you who hate me, yet long to hide thy hate and pose as mercy's self, forget not that thy Arnon thought me fairer by far than thee, and only left me for thy service because his grasping mind saw wealth and fame that way! Kill me here and now, I ask, and let there be an end of me, and take thy lover, whom I have cast off, and be happy if thou canst with my leavings!"

She stopped, and sank back at once into a calm, cold smile, unmoved by the cries of shame and anger that rang through the mighty chamber like the echo of a distant thunder-roll. As for Briseis, her colour deepened to a tinge of fire, then paled, then deepened again, and paled at last to the whiteness of alabaster under the scathing insult of

the wanton's words, and I saw her shapely hand clasp the golden sceptre convulsively as the bitterness of the speech cut to her soul. I was roused to frenzy by the taunt, and, springing forward with "Sunderer" flashing in my hand, shouted in the fair, false face:

"Speak such foul words again in the Queen's hearing, leman, and this blade shall make thee dumb for ever!"

"I could wish a worse end than to fall by that famous sword, my lord," said she meekly, her whole manner changing now, and a strange light gleaming in those lustrous eyes that I liked not at all. "But it ill becomes thee to upbraid me for telling the truth."

I turned aside at that, and the Queen spoke.

"Think not to goad me into slaying thee, Listra," she said, "if for no other reason than because I would not have it said 'twas done for jealous revenge. Nor think that aught thou mayest say can turn me against my Arnon, whom I knew and loved before ever he saw thee, and who only fell a prey to thy evil wiles because Vichri, the traitor, led him to think me false.

"Before all my subjects I say this, Princess, fearing not that all know who is the man that my heart delighteth to honour. One have I loved and one only, and whatever his failings, at heart he has ever been true to me. By love I conquer thee, thou profligate and fallen, and thus do I bestow myself!" And stepping down the first step of the Silver Throne, my Briseis took my great, rough hand between her soft palms, and drawing me to her, placed it to her heart and held it there, looking into my eyes with triumphant love, whilst the great room rang with the admiring plaudits of the people.

I was proud that moment, and felt already a king, now that the Queen had publicly performed the ceremony that from time long past has been the sign of Royal betrothal in Atalantis. Then, gracefully disengaging my hand and remounting the steps, Briseis thus passed sentence on her chagrined enemy:

"And now, Listra, who will no longer be a Princess, but merely a fortuneless wanton, my decree is that thou goest forth from here safe and free, but an exile from Kronos and from what was once thy province. Lest any should lay hands on thee, I command that any who may strive to do thee hurt, equally with any who may aid thee in plots of revenge, shall die the death, and thyself, too, if you come before me a second time. Now lead her forth!"

One moment Listra's eyes blazed fire as she took a step forward, as though to attack the Queen, who thus repaid her evil with good, her spite with mercy, as I also started towards her, fearing danger, but on second thoughts her purpose changed, and she drew back, flushing with scorn.

"'Twere needless, lord," she said to me, "to keep guard over thy royal mate, thy mild, meek dove. I would not now injure her, for thy sake, but love her not too fondly, Macis, as thou valuest thy future happiness! I go, and thus, until we meet again, farewell!"

And gathering up her costly robes with an air of splendid hauteur that in that time of adversity became her well, the once powerful Princess went from the Audience Chamber, through the crowd that opened out to let her pass, in the midst of a great silence.

I breathed a sigh of relief when she had gone, as did the Queen, but Valdo muttered in my ear:

"My mind misgives me of this day's work. Methinks thy Queen will have need to repent of it some day."

"That is as it may befall," I said.

Then Unim, the Priest of Truth, spoke a few well-chosen words to the assembly, telling them that I was now betrothed, in the eyes of men and in the sight of the Spirits, to Briseis the Queen, and that after the customary fifty days of grace the nuptials and the coronation would be performed in the Temple of the Three Gods.

Thereupon up started certain high-placed nobles and distant kindred of the Queen, objecting to our union on the ground that I had been a pirate and was of low birth. To these I answered that, whatever my parentage might be and whatever my early life, I had not spared wealth or blood in fighting for Atlantis since, and that I held myself as noble as any who stood in that hall, and would ask the next who dared to cast a slur upon me to take it back at my sword's point.

At this they held their tongues, some craving my pardon—for bold words and defiant bearing are ever right ways to men's esteem—and then Briseis herself, with scarlet cheeks, stood up on the throne-step and said with simple grace, yet in clear and ringing tones: "The man whom I love shall be my king, nor shall I suffer any to speak a word against him." Thus were the grumblers' mouths effectually closed.

Then, with becoming modesty, the Queen withdrew to her own apartments, leaving Neolyn to read aloud the law relating to royal marriages, and Unim to invoke the blessing of the Spirits on our prospective union, amid the frantic approbations of the delighted audience, which afterwards slowly dispersed.

I then sought a bathe and a less warlike but more comfortable garb than I had worn on ship-board and on the battle-field, and that even sat down to meat with a gay company of nobles and captains in the great banquet-room of the palace. Marenso was there, with Valdo and Atris, on my right hand, Unim, Neolyn, and Orlanis on my left, and at the head of the feast-table I acted the genial host to the merry gathering.

It was a foretaste of my kinghood's duties, and flushed with my great good fortune and the devotion of my fair Briseis, to me the fairest daughter of man who has ever breathed the life-giving air, I could not well be other than overflowing with high good humour, rollicking jocularity, keen wit, and biting satire; with tales of daring, stories of peril, and episodes of love.

We had no ladies at our feast that night, and so the wine circled freely round the board as a swollen river through a dry and thirsty land, the slaves who waited on us knew not a moment's peace or rest for their weary feet, the costly, palate-tickling viands vanished as by magic before the onslaught of our ever-wagging jaws, and joke and repartee of none too straight a kind passed on from lip to lip 'mid bursts of light-won laughter.

And when the grey dawn crept into the room, paling the wasteful lamps and lighting up the dish-strewn table with its garish radiance, there were none of the guests who were not loth to rise, and did not loudly thank the gods for sending such a man to be their king.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Coronation.

Now for fifty days, according to the custom, I could not see my Briseis, nor be seen by her, so had to fill my time as best I might. In truth I had much to do during that period of probation in setting affairs of State to rights after the disorder consequent upon the war.

First I dispatched Quitzaal on a swift-sailing ship, under the charge of Orlanis, to the shores of Ulmeca, giving the officer orders to return as soon as possible.

Then I mustered the remnant of our once mighty fleet, and found to my sorrow that with warships, pirate craft, merchant vessels, slavers, and fishing barques, all told, I could only gather three hundred sail into the bay, and of these many were sorely battered, and most weakly manned. The latter deficiency was soon remedied, all hands being set to work to repair damages, and at the same time I summoned the most noted of the builders of ships to Kronos, commanding them to lay down the keels of two hundred new vessels, and have them ready for launching as soon as could be.

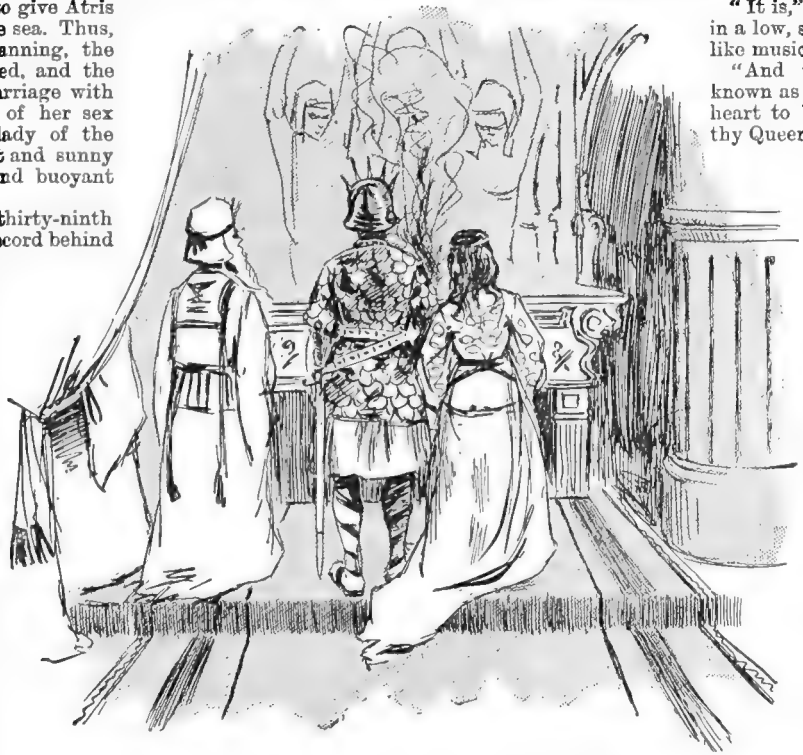
As I held out good wages, and the dockyards and building-sheds of the capital were the best in the country, the shipsmiths and their kindred craftsmen flocked to the city by hundreds, so that very soon the waterside resounded

night and day with the noise of hammering and sawing and the clang of iron tools, was dotted for a great distance with skeleton fabrics and huge timber piles, and was lighted up after sunset with the glare of a hundred flaming fires.

My authority to do all this I obtained from Briseis, her signet seal to all my orders being brought to me by Atris, who cared not how often he was sent to the palace so that he but caught glimpse of or spoke word with his love Izitla, the Queen's handmaid.

Another matter I settled was the disbandment of the greater portion of the army, and the forming of the remainder into a well-armed Royal Guard, officered by those who had borne themselves well in the war, and commanded by Valdo, who wanted nothing better. Marenso I promised to make my Chief Minister when I attained the throne, and it was in my mind to give Atris the command of the sea. Thus, with work and planning, the fifty days were sped, and the morning of my marriage with the fairest flower of her sex and the highest lady of the land dawned bright and sunny as my hopes, gay and buoyant as my heart.

I was in my thirty-ninth year then, with a record behind me that would suffice many men for a lifetime's doings, yet as I stood before the great altar of burnished bronze, whereon flamed the sacred fire that has never been quenched in the memory of man, with Briseis at my right and the three priests at my left, I could well have thought the past a vanished dream, and imagined that I stood on the threshold of a new existence, down whose long, dim vista I should ever wander, my love with me always, and the guardian spirits ever keeping watch and ward to shield us both from harm or sorrow.



I stood before the great altar of burnished bronze.

Alas! for mortal hope and dear day-dreaming, 'tis ever doomed to disappointment. And yet, when you stop to think the matter out more fully, is it not as well that now and then we should have these brighter visions in our common life? That here and there in the dark mysterious tracery of existence we should snatch a glimpse of pure and perfect love and sweet idyllic peace. Is it not as well, after all?

Well or ill, such gleam of bright illusion was mine that morning when Briseis, the Queen, was made my wife in the grand old temple of the Three Gods, the everlasting principles of Truth, and Life, and Love, nor did I strive against its sweet and subtle influence.

We stood there by the altar, with our hands interlocked, heedless of the worshippers who thronged within to get a sight of the ceremony, till Kalen, the priest of Love, bade us kneel before the marble statue of the three divinities which yet are one in essence and in soul.

Down we knelt in reverence, bowing our heads in unison to the masterpiece of sculpture. Then the priest threw sweet-smelling incense in the sacred flame, while others carried swinging censors down the pillared aisles of that great edifice, repeating to the people as they went passages from the Book of the Soul in slow, clear, earnest tones. Then Unim raised his hand for silence, and the murmuring of the vast multitude ceased like the sudden calming of a stormy sea, so that in the universal hush the lowest of his words was heard throughout the whole of the holy chamber.

"In the name of the Spirit of Truth," he said, "I command you both, who are here to be bound together in unchangeable ties, to give true answer to my questioning. Thou, Briseis, the Queen, say truly if it be thy will that the gods join thy life with that of Arnon, thy General?"

"It is," responded Briseis, in a low, sweet tone, that fell like music on my ear.

"And thou, Arnon, once known as Phrena, is it in thy heart to be truly wedded to thy Queen? Answer not without thought, for 'tis a great thing thou wouldst do."

"Natheless, I am resolved," I replied boldly.

"Then shall the wishes of you twain be fulfilled," said Unim. "Rise, O Queen, and rise, Arnon, that the Priest of Life may commend you to his brother Kalen."

We obeyed, and for the first time I gazed at the great concourse of people who crowded the pillared hall, and wedged themselves in all its nooks and corners, suffering from the heat and the pressure, but suffering uncomplainingly for curiosity's sake. Then Neolyn, taking us both by the hand, led us to Kalen, who stood near the eternal fire, and said:

"These, O Kalen, Priest of Love, are twain who would forsake the solitary paths they are pursuing, that they may henceforth walk together in one way, as one soul and one flesh. As two rivers, born on hills set far apart, and travelling many leagues of lonely distance, approach at last and merge into one great stream that is the sum of both and so continue till they reach the restless ocean, so these two would fain their lives did run, and being united, journey together as one from now until they reach that ocean whose name is Eternity."

"And have they answered the questions of Unim?" said Kalen gravely, with, nevertheless, a suggestive smile playing round the corners of his mouth, as was his wont.

"They have," answered Neolyn.

"Then their wishes shall be consummated," said Kalen, "and as the mountains soar to heaven, and the sunbeams shimmer on the sea, these two shall this day be made one."

He made a sign with his right hand, and instantly there floated on the air a soft, low melody, as of a choir of youthful

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voices singing afar off, their harmony mellowed by the distance and enriched by sweet-toned instruments lightly touched by deft fingers, yet distinct and clear, so that not a note was missed of the gentle song.

It rose by soft and slow degrees till I thought the singers were in the altar-room itself, but that I saw them not, and then as slowly sank again into the pleasing murmur of a spirit-song sung softly by a band of unseen singers far away. Fainter and fainter the melody trembled in our ears, dying, as it were, by imperceptible shades, until it went as a whisper through the sacred hall, and so ceased.

Then Kalen laid his hands upon us, one upon the Queen's shapely head, the other on my own raven-ringleted nob, and looking down at us with countenance most benign, thus spoke while the incense flame leapt fitfully in the brazen cup:

"In the name of the Spirit of Love I unite thee Briseis the Queen, with Arnon the General, who is from now the King, and declare you twain henceforward to be of one soul and one flesh, no more to be as two lives, but as one. The blessing of the Spirit of Love, which is the true blessing, shall rest on you all your days, saving only if ye thrust it from ye and cease to live in amity and joy.

"May happiness follow your footsteps as the day the night or the calm the storm; may your children be many, and a pride and a gladness to your hearts to your lives' end; may the pains and grief of the common lot pass you by with gentleness, and may the messenger whose summons none can refuse tarry long in his coming. May all who seek to harm you, to set your souls at variance, to cause you to break the bonds in which you are herewith bound be condemned to the death in this life, and to the desert of misery in the land of shadows, and may ill-fortune follow your enemies all their days.

"Thus blessed and guarded ye shall go forth from here, my children, man and wife, King and Queen of Atlantis, and see to it that you use well the power that is given to you by those who dwell for ever beyond our ken, but who will surely demand of every living soul an account of the deeds it hath done and the using of the faculties they have given it."

"*Wife, I salute thee,*" I said to Briseis, as it is usual to speak on like occasions.

"*Husband, I greet thee,*" answered she, and then, her sweet eyes full of love and joy and pride, she turned to the people, holding me by the hand, and said:

"My subjects, behold your King?"

And the vast assembly voiced their pleasure in one resounding roar of welcoming applause:

"The King! the King!"

Then I drew "Sunderer," flashing like a ray of light, from its polished sheath, and, holding it high over both our heads, I swore a full round oath, by all the spirits and lesser gods, that with this magic, far-famed blade I would cherish and defend my Queen and country against all foes whatever while its edge kept keen and life was in me.

At that another roar of wild acclaim uprose, in the midst of which I led my bride through a secret corridor that Neolyn had shown me the night before, to her gaily-decked cariole, which bore us swiftly through the streets to the Royal Palace, where the coronation ceremony must be performed.

Here a still greater congregation waited our approach in the Audience Chamber, into which I led my Queen with exultation, and in which I sat for the first time on the Silver Throne.

Who, seeing Arnon the Pirate, battling for his life with King Dulo's soldiers in the burning house of dead Miropis, an outlaw and a sea-robber, would have dared to think that one day the said outlaw would sit in the highest place in the land?

Nay, by Thoth and Amun, who would have believed it, seeing him in Sothi's power, or aboard the slaver barque swift sailing to the east, or as the leader of the refugees who fled from treacherous Ethiop, or as the captain of the wrecked *Seamew*, or even as the favoured love of the unfortunate Listra?

None but a man bereft of his senses, say you, and yet it all hath been thus, so mysteriously the Spirits weave the web of the world's destiny.

Some thoughts like these were passing through my mind, as I sat on the regal seat with Briseis, when Neolyn, who had followed us, came forward with the golden crown that Dulo had last worn, giving it to the Queen, who, when I knelt before her, placed it gently on my head.

It was a thick, plain gold circlet, with a rich round ruby of priceless value set in it, just over the forehead, and for all its worth and beauty and the power it implied I was right glad when the time came to lay it aside and rejoice in the free flowing locks that are ever the best headgear. My bride's crown was of a lighter make and with a smaller ruby, but of the same shape and pattern.

"Now," said Neolyn, when I sat once more upon the throne, with the golden symbol of majesty upon my brow, "now indeed we have a King once more in Atlantis, besides a Queen in her own right, and may the sun of happiness from now shine ever in our zenith, nor ever sink to slumber. 'Tis only needed now that thou, Arnon, take the vow on that thou dost hold most dear, and the day's requirements end. Speak well and clearly and with an honest heart, and as thou speakest so live and act. My work is done."

Then, rising amid a veritable storm of thunderous appraise, which calmed to a deep stillness when my lips opened, I took the vow of the Kings of Atlantis, with one hand holding "Sunderer" aloft, as I had done in the temple, and the other resting lightly on the Queen's shoulder.

"By the things which I hold dearest of all the things of earth," I cried, "I swear that naught shall make me faithless to the trust that I have this day taken up. By the Queen, my wife, my love, and by this famous sword, my steadfast friend, which two things in the order named are the two that I most dearly prize, I promise to guard and defend this land against all foes or traitors, within or without, to keep and enforce the laws, to oppress none, to nourish the weak and the suffering, to shield the priests and temples of the Spirits from all hurt, to make her cities great and noble, to reward her generals and captains who do great deeds, and in all things to seek her honour and glory. Thus I have sworn, and may the Spirits forsake me in the hour that I go back upon my vow."

With that I sat down again, and was king, indeed, and for the rest of my life.

Now the people pressed forward to do me homage—which ceremony I would gladly have escaped—and after them came all my friends, with whom I had more patience: Unim, the Priest of Truth, and his fellow-priest, Clisal; Kalen, the Priest of Love; Marenso, who had slept a thousand years; Neolyn; Orlanis, the captain of the dear old *Ravager*; Nayralm, the officer whom I helped to destroy Miropis; Valdo, my woman-hating follower; and, lastly, Atris—with his beloved Izitla and her aged father. All these I granted some boon in honour of the day, but none so willingly and joyfully as I granted the request of the last petitioners, that after another fifty days I would attend the marriage of my bride's waiting-maid with my trusty follower.

"'Twill be a joy second only to to-day's," I said to the blushing, sweet-faced maid, "to see my Atris so well bestowed. Only see to it that thou dost keep him not away from his duties too much. It is an easy thing to do!" They laughed, and, thanking me, went away happy.

Thus went the busy morn and noon and afternoon, nor till even did we gain a respite from the tiring whirl of pageant and festivity, which, spreading from the city outwards, thrilled through all the land in a ripple of gaiety and merrymaking.

'Twas good, indeed, to see the crowds of smiling faces everywhere, the smart displays of flags and bravery on every house, the floral arches thrown across the thronged

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streets, the rich festoons depending from the delicately-carved and finely-coloured capitols of massive columns, the streams of carioles that rattled down the stony wheelways of the roads, and the ample stores of food that, at my own expense, were served out with no niggard hands to the poorer classes.

'Twas better to hear the shouts of wild applause, the cries of joy and loyalty, that told of a people blessed with rightful rulers; to listen to the sounds of revelry, the songs of sweet-voiced singers, and the melodious clash of cymbals, rolling of drums, piping of flutes, and twanging of lyres, all merged and mellowed into festive harmony; 'twas better still to look across the bay at the fleet of three hundred sail and watch them as they fought a sham sea-battle, advancing, retreating, paying off and slewing round, chasing and grappling, till all the curving harbour was alive with mimic fight and motion. 'Twas even better still to note how well my lovely queen bore on her shoulders the burden of her fame and rank and wealth, being not too familiar with the nobles of high rank, reproving gently any courtly arrogance that came within her ken, speaking cherished words of praise to the brave and true, talking most to the humble and lowly without any false pride, and moving with matchless grace through all the day's bright scenes, a regal form of dark, deep loveliness, a type of purest and most beauteous womanhood; and 'twas best of all to see the many good, staunch friends around us who would serve us to the death and think they had but done their duty.

But 'twas when the wild rejoicings waned and the day had reached its end in a swiftly passing gloam of softened half-light that faded into star-lit darkness, and when Briseis and I retired from the gaze of our subjects, and sought the quiet of our own apartments, that the full fruition of our life's joy came to us.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Sleeper's Story.

The world went very well with me then, and as King of Atlantis I lived for seventeen happy, peaceful years; the dearest and the gladdest of my life; brightened ever by the love of Briseis, which waned not, but grew from day to day, and cheered and comforted by the lisping prattle of infant voices, and later, by the merry shouts of children at their play—our children, two black, curly-haired, boisterous, boys, fond of mimic fighting with blunted wooden swords, the eldest and the youngest, with a dark, big-eyed girl between them, giving promise of a beauty witching as her lovely mother's.

These three we had, and these only, but dearer and sweeter were they in our eyes than anything else the world could give.

Didron, we named the eldest, fourteen years old, after the gruff old pirate who had taught me what I knew of sea-craft; "Little Didron," we called him, but in truth he was tall and sturdy as a young giant, and full of consequence withal.

Our daughter we named Vesta, after my fair Egyptian bride whom the sea had taken from me, so free and forgiving to her memory was my Queen; and the youngest, six years old, we named Alcis, in remembrance of the brave standard bearer who fell at my side in the great battle of Ulmeca. He was cast in a gentler mould than the other two, for where Didron was strong and hearty, and inclined to show his mastership when it was called in question, as I had done at his age, and where Vesta was very chary of her regal dignity, Alcis was of a more retiring nature, more considerate of others and simpler in his desires, and his girlish face, though it made him beloved of the Queen and the waiting-maids, often brought down upon him the jokes of his more robust brother, with whom, nevertheless, he could hold his own at skilful fence.

For myself, I loved them all equally, seeing that all cannot be alike and that all were my own.

Atris, also, was wedded to his Izitla, and their one child, their son, they named little Phrena, after the name I had once borne, and next to my own three children I loved the lad, who was as often in the palace as at his father's house—the house where Briseis had once lived and which Valdo now shared with his comrade Atris and the latter's wife and aged father, upon whose hoary head were evident the marks of nigh upon a hundred years.

The four youngsters played together as one family, though I noticed with pleasure, as they grew older, that Phrena chose out Vesta as his especial companion, and that the wayward minx was never so happy as when he chased her through the palace corridors for a merry kiss. I wished nothing better for them than that their youthful liking should grow up into later love, and it seemed to bring back to me my own young days when I had played with golden-haired Viol on the sandy beach of our isle in the sunny sea.

So calm were those seventeen years of joy, so little trouble was there to disturb my crown, that I began to think all danger past and to sink into a restful peace of mind, contented well with the sober records of a warless reign.

The sea had gained on the land but slowly since my coronation, so that the people were lulled into a false sense of secureness, and having made no effort to regain our lost colonies, no disturbing forces moved us from without. Yet though slowly, the sea still gained on the shore, and the absence of their wonted luxuries from abroad told hardly on the populace, so that the nobles were in great disfavour because of the hoards they treasured up and which they refused to share or sell.

Few pirates now rode the southern seas, for my fleet of five-hundred craft swept our coasts continually.

Of Listra I had not heard anything since the day she proudly went from the Queen's presence, an outcast from her rank and sex.

Thus most things gave promise of a long and quiet reign unruffled by the storm of human woe, so that in fancy I already saw myself a white-haired patriarch, dispensing justice from my throne with faltering voice and teaching young Didron to follow in my steps so that in worthiness he might assume my crown when I should need it no more; saw my Queen, my Briseis, my love, still beauteous in my eyes in spite of the added years, travelling by my side, a radiant form of comfort and of hope, adown the sloping hill of life to its peaceful end; saw Atris and Izitla bearing company with us in the inevitable pilgrimage, and their son and our daughter mated in true love bonds, and, perchance, their children—my grandchildren—cheering and enlivening our withered old age with their care-free chatter and innocent happiness; saw our friends, whom we had tried and trusted and not found wanting, traversing the self-same way, and one by one, as the Fates decreed, passing on into the Shadowland beyond.

I already saw the people, better skilled by then in the gentler arts and forgetful of the tricks of war, clustering fondly round my royal dignity, all loth that I should go, yet ready to bestow their loyalty upon my eldest son, and saw beyond the grave a long illustrious dynasty of kings sprung from myself, ruling wisely a great and prosperous nation, invincible within its borders and the mistress of the seas.

So soon had I forgotten the prophecy that was told of the Sleeper, so soon forgotten the words of Unim, the Priest of Truth. My fancy was a fancy only, nor was it long after the seventeen years had passed that my dream was shattered and my earlier fears fulfilled; not long till all the land was in a tumult, destined never to subside. Read on, and you shall be wise as I, though I pray to the gods that you may never be so sorrow-stricken and so sad.

It came about, as the time sped on and the cares of state sat more easily upon me, that I found chance to indulge in sport and pastime, my chief companion in these pursuits being Marenso, who, of all pastimes, preferred fishing.

Sometimes a great retinue would accompany us; but

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show and pomp on like occasions I abhorred, and more often than not the Sleeper and I would steal surreptitiously from the palace, lines and nets in hand, and attended solely by one faithful servant, would seek an hour of quiet sport and conversation by the brink of some secluded stream, or in a quiet nook on the wooded shore. Little Alcis went with us now and then, delighting in the landing of the shining creatures, and clapping his hands in childish glee whenever a larger fish than usual darted past.

Many places we tried, but none so suited us as one near the shore, just a little to the N.E. of the bay. It was in a smaller bay, or inlet, that curved so sharply landwards, and was so narrow at its mouth that it seemed more like the estuary of a river than an arm of the sea. On the spit of land betwixt it and the ocean was a lovely dell, disposed in terraced ridges, and sprinkled over with an abundance of glorious flowers, the rich and blended perfumes of white-robed lilies, blush-red roses, and demurely-dressed deminons filling the redolent air.

It was a lovely spot, and there, one thrice-accursed day, Marenso and I were casting our hand-nets, while Alcis gambolled merrily under the shade of a giant aloe in full bloom, whose clustering pyramidal flowers rose grandly above the dark coronals of leaf. It was towards even, in the days when twilight lingers, and, looking seaward over the limitless expanse of billowy blue, the eye caught sight of several far-off specks of snowy sail, speeding homeward for the night, while, nearer, the birds were singing their evensongs with trill and chatter, and one precocious frog was disturbing the air with his dismal croaking.

We threw our nets and let out our lines, but all to no purpose. We could see the finny denizens of the inlet flashing hither and thither in the slanting shafts of light that trembled in the water, gathering round the tempting bait or hovering near the nets, but not one would rise to bite nor float into our traps.

We lost our patience at last, which fishermen do not often, and railed loudly at the obdurate creatures. Something in the atmosphere oppressed us also; it weighed heavy on our heads, and a strange opalescent yellowness hung over sea and land like a shadowy pall. The sky in the east looked leaden, and the very insects hummed in droning, listless tones about our ears.

"A storm is brewing, I will wager," said my comrade at length, dragging out his tackle in disgust, "and if so, 'tis of no avail to try to lure these little wretches from their element. Draw up thy lines and sit back here on this mossy bank, and we will talk, for a lazy, idle feeling has seized me."

"As it hath myself," I made reply, "and as it seemeth it hath these rebellious fishes, who obey not their king as loyal subjects ought! Of what shall we speak, Marenso?"

"If thou wouldst care to hear the story of my life before I fell asleep, which I have never yet told, I will talk of that," said he, "for I have a strong premonitory sense of coming evil that urges me to speak."

"Say on, my friend," I cried, taking Alcis on my knee and bidding him hearken to a tale that he would one day be proud of having listened to, "say on, nor think to weary me, for there is an hour of day as yet, and 'tis a thing I have often wished to know, though I have forborne to ask."

"It is not a long story, though it covers forty years," said the Sleeper, "but 'tis a curious one. King Monteza had just assumed the crown when I was born, and for the first thirty years of his reign knew not a day's relief from struggling with the hostile forces of his two cousins, Alcalda and Nem. These two hated one another as the tiger hates the crocodile, but they hated their royal cousin more, and so fought in unison against him.

"You must know that Kronos here was not then built, and that the Royal Court was held in those days at Miropis, where also the Sacred Grotto was, in which I worshipped often. Also, where the sea now rolls, the land—a rich and fertile tract—extended many a league from what is now the shore. I have told you once of the Isle of Olives; it was a day's journey on horseback from Miropis to the seaport whence we sailed for it. But the Isle itself is now buried under the greedy waters.

"The rebel leaders occupied chiefly the provinces of Aidè, Yand, and Saitè, and the rival armies were evenly balanced, so that neither side could gain advantage for many years.

"With my twin brothers, Mattoni and Olasin, a year younger than myself, I grew up among the disloyalists, and as soon as we were strong and tall enough, we were put under arms, and went to the war in our father's company. Our mother wept bitterly the day we set forth, proud and excited, for the front, and would fain have kept us back at the last. But our father was a stern, gruff man, who laughed at women's fears and mocked at their weaknesses, and with a great oath he bade us march on and be like men, getting into his saddle and riding off without so much as a word of farewell to his wife.

"I shall never forget that day. Our house was near the frontier of the two countries—for so Atlantis was then known—and the tide of battle had rolled to within a day's march of it, so that when we joined our array at noon, the fight had begun. Long and severe was that fight, the issue hanging in the balance, finely drawn, till the very end. Backwards and forwards the red tide surged, now from our home, and now towards it, but ever flowing with blood and death.

"At even it was over, and our friends were flying for their lives across the plain, hotly pursued by the victorious soldiers of King Monteza. My father fell and received his death-wound in that mad retreat, and when I and my brothers returned to our home, hungry, ragged, and foot-sore, after many days, we found only a charred ruin, with the corpses of our mother and our faithful servants lying under the gaunt, grim wreck, slain by the enemy."

"'Tis a terrible hearing," said I, "but how came it that thou afterwards went over to the enemy? for you said to the Queen, after your awakening, that you had fallen asleep, Monteza's General."

"If you will have patience, King, you shall soon know," answered the Sleeper gravely, "and when thou hast heard, you will no longer marvel thereat. Of all men, I least could have fashioned the thought that one day I should make peace with the enemies of my father and mother, and least of all on that day when we three brothers stood by the blackened, ruined house, and swore with uplifted hands never to rest until the slayers of our mother were themselves slain and their friends defeated and brought to justice.

"The King's triumph was short-lived, and in the next long engagement we found ourselves in the ranks of the victorious, gaining glory and renown by our recklessness in the struggle and our eagerness in the pursuit, and thence-forward rose steadily in favour till we were made captains of brigades, and were known throughout the land as the Dauntless Brothers, inseparable either in victory or defeat.

"Now, tired of the long struggle, and jealous of each other, the quarrellings of the two claimants to the throne grew frequent, causing a division in our ranks, and setting our soldiers against their friends and comrades. This I regretted greatly, seeing that our division would be the enemy's advantage, but, with my brothers, was compelled to uphold Prince Nem, who was the more honourable of the two, and the more inclined to peace.

"At last the trouble came to a head at a banquet that was held after a defeat that should have been a triumph. We three were there, as well as the two leaders, and from the first I feared that blood would be shed before the feast was done. However, all went well till the wine passed round, when Alcalda, who was given to drink and like a tiger when full of it, began to growl at our ill-luck, and throw out dark hints as to where the blame should rest. Nem bore his insults in silence for awhile, or only answered in jest, but when his brother, enraged at his quietness, rose and hurled a drinking cup straight at his

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head, he sprang to his feet with a fierce oath, and at the sword's point dared Alcalda to repeat his words.

"Like an infuriated beast now, the other replied with his weapon, and the guests taking part, the room was at once full of strife and running with ruddy blood. Our side, chiefly owing to the efforts of our Dauntless Brothers, was rapidly gaining the mastery, when an old general, Balinin by name, rushed in and bade us cease.

"'Let our leaders fight out their own quarrel,' he said, wisely, 'and let whoever is the victor be our only chief.'

"His words pleased us, and holding down our blades, we stood and watched the two struggling in the death grip. It was a struggle long and severe, but in the end, much to my chagrin, Alcalda slew his rival, the temperate-minded Nem, and Alcalda we all acknowledged as our rightful King.

"We three, for our liking for Nem, were never in favour with the victor thereafter, and but for our vow we had gone over to Monteza's camp, as some others did. As it was, we served Alcalda faithfully, so that he had no excuse for turning against us openly.

"Thus matters stood with us for awhile, till one day, pursuing a band of the foe's foragers too far, we were taken in an ambuscade, surrounded, and captured, after a stern fight. In a few days we were brought to the King's presence—for our fame was well known in his camp—and put upon our trial.

"'And so you are the Dauntless Brothers?' said Monteza, eyeing us keenly; 'you are the three who have so often turned the tide of battle against me?'

"'We are, and are proud of it,' answered Olasin.

"'And why have you fought against me, instead of for me?' asked the King. 'Think you that your prince, who has slain his brother, would make a fitter ruler than myself?'

"'No, King,' replied Mattoni, who was the readiest of speech amongst us, 'no, King. But thy men killed our father in battle the first day that we bore arms at his side, and thy men also slew our mother and our servants, and burnt our house to the ground. For that we fight against thee, for that we have sworn to fight thee until our parent-slayers are themselves slain and their friends dishonoured.'

"'"Tis no wonder that ye are rebels,' said Monteza; 'and I cannot cast blame upon ye for it, though such evil deeds were never done with my wish.'

"Then he thought for awhile, resting his chin on his hands, saying at last:

"'Art aware that since Alcalda has made a practice of slaying all his prisoners, I have done the same, and that your lives are forfeited?'

"'To our sorrow, King,' said we: 'we know our Chief has done it, and make no appeal to thy mercy.'

"'Nevertheless,' said Monteza, 'promise me but one thing—namely, that if your vow should be accomplished, and your Chief should turn against you, you three will come and serve under my banner, and you shall go free from here and back to your friends.'

"Astonished beyond measure, we took counsel amongst ourselves, and through Mattoni promised, and, thanking the King, went back to Alcalda's camp rejoicing, giving out there that we had escaped by stratagem.

"We understood King Monteza's intentions better a few months later, when a great bullock waggon, full of human heads, and attended by a countryman, drove into our lines, and was emptied in front of our tent, to the amazement of the soldiers.

"'These are the heads of the slayers of the parents of the Dauntless Brother,' said the unarmed, rustic waggoner who brought them, 'and are sent by command of King Monteza, who bade me say that the generals who commanded the day the deed was done are now dishonoured and reduced to the lowest rank, so that the Dauntless Brothers have now no cause to fight against him.'

"'"Tis well,' said Mattoni to Olasin and I, 'but as yet Alcalda has not turned on us, and our promise can still remain a promise. As for these heads, let us get them buried, for now I have seen them even revenge has lost its charm.'

"'As it hath to me,' I answered.

"Now some of the soldiers would have taken the messenger captive, but I interfered, and saw that he was given a safe conduct to the frontier.

"For a day or two all went on as before, but it seems that certain of the soldiers, mean wretches without shame, went secretly to Alcalda and told him of the matter, repeating the royal message, and seeing a chance to vent his jealous hate upon us, the Rebel Chief sent a strong body of his most trusted men to seize us in the night. Our friends, however, were many, and the plot being revealed to us in time we managed to evade his myrmidons, and, seeking safety in flight, came to Monteza's camp and offered him our services."

"Thou couldst do little else, then," I said.

"So thought we," continued Marenso, "and right gladly our erstwhile enemy welcomed us, saying with a chuckle of conceit, that though he had spared our lives once, we had given them up to him of our own free will.

"Thereafter we fought with the soldiers of Monteza, gaining even greater fame than before, and because of our knowledge of Alcalda's weaknesses, leading our troops to victory after victory, till only the province of Yand was left to the rebels, wherein they were cooped up by our armies.

"By that time I alone was left a soldier amongst my brethren, for Mattoni, ever glib of tongue, had become the High Priest of Truth and well versed in all the ancient mysteries, while Olasin, slower of speech, but more cunning and fonder of his ease, became the King's chief minister.

"But in camp and on the battlefield 'twas I whom the King liked best and I whom he made his general, second only in authority to himself. 'Twas I who led his victorious armies in the last campaign, and who, after a pitched battle and a long, running fight, met and slew Alcalda in single combat, and so brought the war to an end and gave peace to Atlantis. 'Twas I who thus gave Monteza an undivided realm, seating him firmly on the throne."

"Then how came it that the King let thee sleep so long a slumber without effort to wake thee?" I said. "For surely thou wert too useful a subject to be lightly lost!"

"I am coming to that presently," he said, "for there was a woman at the root of my mishap, as I verily believe there is a woman at the root of all earthly troubles. Let me tell thee the story in my own way."

(To be continued.)

Jumbled Story Competition.—25.

On the next page appears a story, each line of which is numbered. The lines are all in their wrong position, and the prizes mentioned below are offered to those who write on a sheet of paper the numbers of the lines in the order most nearly correct. The title is jumbled up, and should be correctly given *and pasted on the paper containing the effort.*

The conditions are jumbled in the following paragraph as an example. The correct order of the lines is given in line 10.

1 SHORT STORIES on or before *Monday,*
2 awarded to the readers whose solutions first
3 *JUMBLED STORY.*
4 Four Prizes—one of £5 and three of £1 each—are
5 *December 21st,* and envelopes must be marked
6 correct. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be
7 reach this office.
8 All attempts to be delivered at the offices of
9 offered to the readers whose keys are most nearly
10 4—9—6—2—7—8—1—5—3—12—11—13—10.
11 a sheet of paper the figures in the order they
12 Competitors in doing the story should write on
13 believe to be correct, thus:

£2 is offered to the first of the readers living in Ireland who succeeds in forwarding the correct, or most nearly correct, solution.

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JUMBLED STORY No. 25.] [*See Page 795.*

NOT HER WAY TOM ASHLUN.

A quaint cottage, standing alone in a little bit of broken hearts.

A young girl, friendless and relationless, lived accompanied by a large dog, and carrying a stout face turned towards the heat of the flames.

A man was fishing at the side of the bridge. He looked back at the figure seated at the fire. Then noticed that she hesitated, and came forward to the story of his love, and the eyes of the blind girl encountered a cabinet. She drew a key from her detail of that last meeting. The man poured out this woman who had waited five long years for his broken heart.

But this man was not as other men.

The man watched her with dog-like eyes, as she walked through the village, past the straggling row beneath her. She started back with a little cry, as he passed on, and the curtain dropped softly behind many things over the winter's fire.

The man dropped his hands to his side. Something moved about the room with easy grace. It was late that he knew so well.

In the dim light of the fire it was with difficulty but he placed the girl's trembling hand under his feet, and Wealth in his hands.

But the time soon came for the man to go away. Afterwards neither of them ever forgot the smallest last remnant of former days.

And a great love sprang up between them.

After that the man came often to see the blind girl placed her foot upon it, and a plank gave way a tiny cottage in a tiny village.

Blind! The man started at the word. It seemed eternal darkness. He did not say, "I am sorry," though fearing some unknown danger.

"Thank you," said the girl. "I am very grateful so that he hardly knew it himself. "I have come here alone, cared for only by her housekeeper, the girl's confidence returned. She stirred up the fire of a swift-flowing stream.

The man's teeth bit into his lip until the blood went away.

He came a step forward, and held out his arms.

Presently she rose to her feet, and crossing the sides of a room, the floors were covered with artisticness—the furniture was placed round the heavy carpets, there were no doors, and few stairs—Then, with a quick movement, she drew out the words softly to herself. Then, without turning her walking stick in her hand. She went down the garden, arranged within with a certain æsthetic bottle, containing a greenish liquid.

Now it has been said that men do not die of blind eyes.

He looked keenly into the girl's face, but she seemed to rise in his throat and hold him before he tore himself away.

Somehow, he had expected that her instinct would assist her. He led her carefully across.

Then a thought occurred to him. "I will test her room. He paused, with his hand on the curtain, and sat quite still in her chair, as though turned to that he made out the figure of the girl seated in a floor.

So, with her promises ringing in his ears, the man came.

One winter afternoon the girl went for a walk, country lanes, across the meadows, and through the woods, until she presently found herself at the side of cottages to that tiny one at the end of them all smiting him for what he had done, found the body and wrote on a sheet of paper:

"Who is it?"

"I go to find him."

The man thought it was indifference. Rather, a stopper, and placed the bottle to her lips.

Five years later he came back, with Fame at his pocket, and opening the door, brought out a little dog bounded on in front, and showed him the way.

A fragile bridge crossed to the other side. The low chair drawn up before it.

She passed her fingers over it, feeling it carefully.

When they came to the little cottage, the blind girl. They took long walks together, and talked of him."

He found everything as he had left it, when he worshipped him. Tell me, what of him? Is he well? Is he happy?"

What is time, when one faces eternity?

"He is dead. He is dead." The girl repeated the tongue-tied. Yet he longed to rush forward, and like to be alone."

"He is well," he replied slowly, "and happy, indeed, if her love is strong."

"Loved him," cried the girl, "I adored him; I seemed to brighten as she heard him.

Without a word, the man turned, and crossed the room to the writing table, took a pen in her hand, for the troubles of this world are now as nothing to the man.

"I have come," he said, and his voice was changed to you. I am blind."

The girl sat quite still when he had left her, her head: "I thank you for your news. Now, I would return!

The little clock on the mantlepiece struck hour after hour, but she did not heed it.

Then she felt on the wall until her hands impossible that one so young and fair should live in strong arm, and insisted on taking her home. The from one who loved you, and who thought that you once loved him."

The man, returning a little later, his heart into a cheerful blaze, and drew two chairs before it. take the girl in his arms, and kiss her on her dear, have told her that it was he. Instead:

If he had only known how perfect was the love of of the girl he loved lying cold and stiff upon the stone.

* * * * *

And that was the worst thought that ever came to him.

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THE CHRISTMAS JEWELS.

Amid the vast stillness of the winter night there was a gleaming, like the dust of diamonds, whose particles sparkled into minute flames when the moonlight glanced athwart the snow, which seemed to sing beneath the tread of two passers-by, so crisp and frosty it was.

"Christel, oh, little Christel; dost thou feel how my love binds me fast to thee?" murmured a youth's voice, and handsome Jean took the hand of the maiden, whose red lips quivered as if in response to the glistening of her beautiful eyes.

With her slender fingers smoothing down a lock of fair hair that was in danger of straying into her eyes, the girl spoke as follows: "I think Rose will be at the *réveillon* (midnight repast), so let us hurry on. Dost thou know her lover has given her a gold cross and also a ring of gold with an agate setting? Last month my grandfather gave me a gold cross, too, but it is so small a one! What will he give me, I wonder, for a New Year's gift?"

Poor, handsome Jean pressed her hand, and swiftly, softly, bent down and imprinted a burning kiss upon it. But pretty Christel seemed not to notice what he had done, and sighingly continued: "Many, many jewels have great ladies. Is it not a fine thing, Jean, to be a great lady with jewels and gold—to be rich and beautiful, Jean, rich and beautiful!"

The poor fellow gazed with gloomy, yet yearning, love-gleaming glances upon her; for his love for her was no less timid than deep, no less helpless than ardent, and impressed upon him a look of sorrow. If riches had only been his, how he would have lavished them on the girl beside him!

They walked on in silence until, when the woodland grew sparse, a red, flickering light guided the guests to the midnight feast, and invited them to enter the house. There crackled and blazed the cheery hearthfire; there the old folks talked in low, measured tones of things of the olden times; the young people sitting apart listening with tender respect and due attention, while a fatty smell from the buckwheat cakes, mingled with the sugary scent of mulled wine, permeated the thick steam that, rising, flattened itself out against the low ceiling.

Eleven o'clock struck in some distant church tower, and the first clang of a bell trembled athwart the clear out-of-door shadowiness. Christel, listening, turned towards her companion, and with tear-dimmed eyes whispered: "If we could only believe the old folks, Jean!"

"What dost thou mean, pretty Christel?"

"Dost thou not remember, Jean, the legend of the Brèche up yonder," and she pointed through the window to a lofty crag, coldly shining above the forest, "the legend of the rock that every Christmas eve is cleft asunder and remains thus apart whilst midnight completes its twelve strokes; the legend of yonder rock and its hidden treasures? Surely, Jean, thou canst not fail to remember? What if we venture up there, what if it all should be true, Jean?"

Incredulity was in her voice and eyes, yet she smiled so longingly that the youth said: "Let us go then, dearest maid. Let us discover if it indeed be true."

So, taking leave of the kind people assembled for the *réveillon*, they set forth once more, gaining faith with every forward step that led them towards the crag, as they both silently recalled the ancient story, handed down from sire to son for ages, of a castle that once reared upon that height its gloomy, terror-inspiring battlements and bade defiance to all the peaceful country side, until one night, along with its sacrilegious lord and his accursed wealth, it was on a sudden swallowed up by the yawning maw of the mountain.

Many a witness there had been, so said the old folk, of the prodigies occurring at the Brèche just at the hour when in universal joy the Christian world celebrates the birth of the Redeemer, and miracles are permitted to astonish and awe mankind. Had the great rock not been seen to open as a door turns on its hinges, letting one gaze into dark passages that suddenly shone with the subterranean splendour of the long-lost treasure, whose fabulous masses of flashing gold and scintillating heaps of precious stones, the harvest of woe and bloodshed, were for an instant revealed, to be as swiftly sealed fast within the mountain again until another twelve months had fled into the past?

At length Christel broke the silence by murmuring: "Oh, Jean! if it be true, if it really be true, shall we not, while the hour is striking, shall we not stoop down and lean forward and pick up a ring, a necklace? We'll be so quick, so quick—a ring, a necklace, a string of pearls, a diamond brooch! Only just think of it, Jean! Thou wilt try for me, wilt thou not, dear Jean?" she urged, again appealing to her lover.

"Yes," he answered, with burning eyes and firmly-pressed lips, "yes, my Christel, I will try. Come, let us walk faster! Come, my darling!"

She looked at him adoringly: "Oh, Jean, how kind thou art!" she murmured, and was about to proffer her lips for a kiss; but there came such a sadness into Jean's eyes that she felt a vague shame steal upon her and hinder her from doing more than give him her hand.

Turning aside from the road, they plunged into the snow beneath the ancient spruce trees, whose sleet-bearded branches bent earthwards protectingly and, as it were, warningly, seeming to be conscious of the mad errand whereon the young couple had set out, then amongst loose stones and rocks, that jutted towards the summit.

Immense masses of ice groaned and seemed ready to split beneath their footsteps as they crossed fissures of unknown depth; often they would slip and come near sliding down some precipitious slope. Jean even had to carry Christel in places, a task anything but disagreeable, if such danger had not constantly threatened them. She fretted lest they should arrive beyond the hour of midnight, and thus be too late for the acquisition of any of the beautiful fabulous things locked up within the mountain.

But the sky grew cloudy, veiling the moon and stars, while, like petals detached from the flowers in some

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enchanted garden, a few snowflakes fell slowly through the seemingly stirless air. The huge Brèche loomed threateningly above the spruce forest, and far, far below, the valley lay dimly white, like the ghost of a landscape. Some black, gnarled roots coiled snakelike at the base of the crag as they approached and joined divers jagged lumps of rock together in dismal union. Jean, setting his precious burden down, pointed to a spot where the rock appeared beneath a bluish layer of ice, and simply said: "It is here."

Then they both sat down upon a stone to await the mysterious scene at the midnight stroke. Shivering with cold and a little frightened, Christel drew close to Jean, ever keeping her eyes fixed on the bluish spot in the ice; while the youth again clasped her hand and endeavoured to let her feel silently how strong and willing he was to protect her. He did not watch the ice upon the rock; his eyes turned skywards to gaze on the moon, which, re-issuing from a cloud, appeared reddish as in an eclipse, and a few stars also came fresh into view athwart the mist and the sparsely-falling snowflakes.

Hark! Remote, muffled, like a voice from out the past, amid the vast stillness a prelusive tinkle ascends. The first stroke of the midnight hour sounds! The mystery must now, if ever, unfold itself. With fast-beating hearts, Jean and Christel rise to their feet, in silent expectancy awaiting the miracle, and both now riveting their eyes upon the ice-covered rock. The air still vibrates with the first stroke of midnight, when, as though smitten by the spear of some pagan deity, the rock is rent asunder, gaping wide almost at their very feet; while a deep, dark, cavernous passage appears, that gradually becomes luminous from the entrance of the outer semi-radiance, as well as from the increase of the mystic inner glimmering.

While Christel stretches out her hands eagerly towards the sparkling cavern, Jean, disdaining to make use of a ruined flight of steps leading sideward into the mountain, leaps down directly into the shining mass and is lost to view in its dazzling splendour; but the shock of his leap causes the gold to chink and knock together with a sound that makes sweetest music to the ear of the young girl who stands without, now feverish with anxiety also, lest the magic spectacle vanish ere she can profit thereby, and she shudders with apprehension as the third stroke of the twelve resounds, faint and far, from the distant valley.

Meanwhile, Jean, his feet bathed, so to speak, in the precious coruscations, stoops down and gathers handfuls of big gold discs linked together by tiny chains, and, after flinging them out of the cavern, he picks up a diadem with an open setting of imperial diamonds and emeralds blazing like white and green flies, intermixed with rubies whose tint is like snow touched by the rosy light of dawn, and with topaz radiantly yellow as the sunlight itself.

This crown of fabulous worth he likewise tosses out into the snow, so as to gather an armful of pearl necklaces beautiful beyond expression; costly girdles of amethysts, sapphires, and turquoises, polished, but uncut, and held in place by gold filagree; rosaries fit for a queen, wherein in every tenth bead is a garnet, round and glossy as little crimson gooseberries, and wherein the Paternoster is composed of black and white diamonds arranged alternately. Like Christel, Jean also grows anxious, but not for himself, as the strokes fall from the distant clock. At the tenth stroke, with arms full laden, he stands upright, and casts the rich burden at his fair companion's feet; then, clutching firmly the jagged edge of the rock, he draws himself together preparatory to making a spring upwards and outwards.

He can see Christel close beside the cavern entrance, kneeling in the snow, her blonde hair tossed by the wind that has begun to blow, and streaming back into the shadows. Her eyes laugh at him, despite their fervour and anxiety of expression, and seem to caress him with their fond, fervid gaze.

Hark! Another stroke of the clock! Jean is ready to leap out; but he hears the cry of her whom he loves, a cry that is like a supplication: "More, more!"

He paused and looks at Christel, and, with close-set lips, but a heart full of forgiveness, lets go his hold of the rock and plunges down again into the inexhaustible treasure. He snatches a ring, and holding it high, like a symbol of victory, flings it with its gold-encircled, great, blood-red Oriental ruby towards the girl, whose hand makes a movement to catch it. Suddenly the twelfth stroke echoes through the wind-stirred air. Quick! Oh, Jean! Quick, ere it be too late! But the last vibration had ceased.

Noiselessly, even as it unclosed, does the rock shut to once more, and the snow begins to fall fast, its great white flakes dancing impishly round the maiden kneeling all alone with her eyes still fixed smilingly upon the glorious ruby, not yet realising the horror of her situation, not yet awakened to the thought of the brave, loyal lover, self-sacrificed to satisfy her thirst for wealth.

Maurice Pottecher.

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Envelopes containing the attempts should be marked *"£100 Coupon"* and should reach this office *not later than first post on Monday, January 4th, 1897.*

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Two Jolly Girl Bachelors.

For several years they had worked together, lunched and dined and breakfasted together, shared one another's heart's secrets, and been inseparable companions. Men who knew the jolly girl bachelors called them ideal women. When one felt sad and heartsick and given over to the little moods that make a girl wretchedly, miserably woe-begone, the other was always there to comfort or laugh the tears away.

Flat Cosy, with its tiny corners filled with downy sofa cushions, was the resting place for more than one weary friend, who would drop in during the evenings for a cup of fragrant tea and a comfortable chat. The little brass tea kettle would hum a busy roundelay, and join in the argument as sturdily as if its fat little body contained a fairly good pair of lungs. Margaret was the elder of the two girls. She was always the same, good-natured, laughing Margaret.

Their men friends raved over Margaret's pretty face, but she sadly lacked the graceful, pretty ways that so soon disappear when a girl enters the busy world of business. Her appearance was that of a well-informed, independent young woman, who was quite content with her masculine manner and airs of a girl bachelor.

As to Dorothy, the other girl—well, she wasn't what one would call a pretty girl. Her nose was a trifle too saucy, and her mouth could have been smaller. But she had wonderfully soft and fluffy hair that curled round her ears, and then piled itself in a silky knot on the top of her head. Her eyes were always bright, and were of that tender brown that one so seldom sees.

They were so unlike, those two girls, yet they drifted through life, each firm in her belief that no other girl lived who was quiet so unselfish, so sweetly dear, and so thoroughly good as her friend.

"We must be nice old spinisters, Margaret, dear," Dorothy used to say. "Or cross old maids, with cork-screw curls and plenty of cats and parrots, you know; because if you were to marry and leave me I'd die from loneliness, and I am sure you couldn't live without me."

"Indeed, I could not," Margaret would answer. "But I feel sure you will be the first to desert our little nest."

"How can you say such things?" and Dorothy's mouth would pucker up in a most melancholy manner.

Secrets were unknown to them. Love-letters were always read and commented on, and considered the rightful property of both girls. Simple Dorothy would dilate at great length over her love affairs, and many a glorious laugh did they both have when Jack Ryerson took it into his head to fall in love with her.

Jack was an artist. Not at all like the fascinating fellow in the story-books, who wears velvet coats and lives on biscuits and ale in a dusty and romantic studio, but a well-built man, who was employed in the art department of a commonplace publishing house.

"Sometimes I think that Dorothy isn't a real live girl at all," he once remarked to Margaret. "When she stood there in the doorway a moment ago, with her head tilted on one side and her hair looking so pretty, I couldn't help wondering if I were not actually looking at some old painting."

Dorothy was very fond of Jack. They used to have jolly times when she posed for his pictures, and, in fact, Jack Ryerson's sketches of pretty girls were unrivalled and the envy of all his fellow-workers. After each of their little sketching séances Dorothy would tell Margaret all about what Jack said, and how he said it, and what she said back. But one evening after Jack had gathered up his crayons and departed Dorothy marched off to her own room without the customary chat. Margaret was alarmed.

She brought out the mandoline, and sang several street ditties in the hopes that Dorothy would emerge from her den to have her ruffled spirits smoothed down. But no Dorothy appeared. It was after midnight, and Margaret had been asleep for some time when she was aroused by a white-robed figure that glided silently to her side, slid two very cold arms round her, and with a dismal little tremble sobbed:

"Maggy, darling, I'm so wretched and unhappy."

"Dorothy," Margaret gasped, "you'll catch your death; go back to bed at once and sleep. Do now, there's a dear."

"Sleep?" queried Dorothy. "I can't sleep. I haven't slept for a week. I got some powders from Dr. Hall to-day, and he said that I was nervous and tired out and needed rest; but he doesn't know anything. He——"

"Is it Jack, Dolly?" and Margaret looked into the fine brown eyes that shone in the moonlight.

"I don't know myself," Dorothy doubtfully replied, "but I presume it is. I feel as if I hadn't a friend in the world when he's not with me, and I'm too happy to breathe when he is here" (Margaret smiled just then), "and that's what makes me wild, and that's what makes me hate myself. He probably says all those pretty compliments to every woman he meets."

Things were never quite the same between them after that. Somehow Margaret seemed less sympathetic, and Dorothy felt that she was no longer interested in her foolish affairs. Jack and Dorothy began to find comfort in the silly little quarrels that only those who are in love indulge in.

At last, one day their argument ended most unfortunately, and although Jack wasn't really serious, Dorothy felt sure that he was, and was quite broken-hearted.

"You do make me so unhappy," she pouted. "I almost wish that you'd go and drown yourself, or hang yourself—do anything so that I'll never see you again. You keep me perfectly miserable all the time."

"Dolly! Sweetheart!" Jack pleaded. "Forgive me. I was only teasing you. I love you with all my heart!" Then, noticing her sneering smile, he said desperately: "but you don't believe it."

"No, I don't," Dorothy answered pettishly. "How many girls have you said that to? How far down on the list do I come? Really, now, but doesn't your conscience trouble you when you think of all the feminine hearts that you have broken? But I presume you have become hardened to it," and then Dorothy started up a series of hysterical bursts of merriment.

"Dorothy, I can't understand you," was all Jack said, and he slowly gathered together his scattered pencils, put them in his pockets, and departed without another word.

As he went out into the shadows of the street, he

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was half-inclined to rush back and entreat her to believe him. He did love her. To be sure, he had told other girls that he loved them, but his regard for them had never been just like the affection he had for Dorothy. He would give his life for that moody, tearful bit of femininity that he had left curled up in a big arm-chair. He kept saying to himself in an insane sort of fashion: "I love you, Dorothy, I love you." Then, when he found that he had wandered for miles with the chill air cutting his face and making his ears tingle, he laughed silently and said: "But I'll tease her. I'll pretend to make love to Margaret. By Jove! Why didn't I think of that before?"

A few days after that, Dorothy was missed from her desk at the office, and for the first time since the beginning of their friendship, Margaret lunched alone. During the long hours Dorothy wandered about the Flat Cosy, now plucking leaves from the geraniums in the window, now standing before the large mirror on the dressing-table, smoothing her white cheeks, brushing back the curls from her damp forehead, and studying her eyes that appeared to have grown suddenly larger.

But when Margaret went home that night Dorothy was quite like her old self. There was a bright spot on either cheek, and Margaret thought she had never seen Dorothy look sweeter. After dinner they sat before the fire, Dorothy with her head in Margaret's lap and Margaret's arms about her. They talked over every happy hour they had spent together. They laughed and even played childish games as they munched chocolates that Margaret said grew in her jacket-pockets. And when the time came to say good-night, and Dorothy kissed Margaret, as was her custom, Margaret puzzled over the tear that had fallen on her hand.

Dorothy had planned it all that afternoon. Three powders, Dr. Hall had said, would cause the death of a ten-year-old child, and she had all the powders that he had left with her—there were ten at least. He had cautioned her so carefully, for the medicine was very strong, and an overdose would surely prove fatal. Yes, she felt that she was wicked. Jack loved Margaret. He didn't love her, with the plain face and moody ways. It was Margaret. How could she have been so blind? He knew that she, Dorothy, loved him, so he said all those pretty things to comfort her.

She slipped into the pink eider-down that Jack so admired. She arranged her hair after the fashion that he professed to have liked best. Mechanically she folded and put away all the stray garments that were lying about the room. From her glove box she took a package that contained several folded bits of paper. Her gloves! They had never looked so pretty before. Her fan, too—but then Margaret could use it. How her temples throbbed! What made her choke so? Her heart seemed bursting with grief.

Oh, yes, she had forgotten. She must say her prayers—she had never neglected them—so she knelt down beside the white bed. For some reason she couldn't frame the words. She would get as far as "Thy kingdom come," and she would seem to forget and would mutter, "Dear old Jack! When I am dead you can marry Margaret and forget all about silly Dorothy. I would not love you if I could help it, and don't want you to love me because you are sorry for me."

At last she arose. How cramped her limbs were! There were the powders. Taking the cover of her porcelain powder-box, she emptied the contents of all the white papers in it. Her hands trembled when she raised it to her lips, but she grew strong, and in a moment was staring vacantly at the little cover, with its feathery coating of powder. The bed seemed so far away! She tottered towards it. How soft the pillows felt! She was so sleepy, too.

What sweet music she heard, and who had brought all the flowers that were floating through the air? There was an odour of jasmine. Jack was so fond of jasmine. Jack! Why, there was Jack! Dear Jack! He did love her after all. It was not Margaret at all. If she could only run her fingers through his hair, but somehow she could not move her hands. Ah! Jack came closer then. Yes, yes, it was really Jack. She felt his warm breath against her cheeks, but she could not see him any more. Everything was so black and dark. Jack's lips met hers. With a happy smile, she drifted into the mysterious "Valley of the Shadow."

P. S. L.

RESULT OF JUMBLED STORY COMPETITION, No. 22.

The first prize of £5 goes to Miss E. Champ, 16, Prospect Hill, Walthamstow.

A prize of £2 has been sent to Mr. Henry E. Fay, 12, Ormond Road, Rathmines, Dublin.

Prizes of £1 each have been sent to Mr. R. H. Jacobs, H.M.S. *Alexandra*, Portland; Miss Burge, Lorne Cottage, Newton Abbot, Devon; and Mr. Robert Henderson, 4, School Terrace, Golborne, Newton-le-Willows, Lancs.

KEY.—Title: "A Love Song."

10	83	75	9	2	54	43	14	51
65	98	8	90	39	24	70	84	119
3	73	12	36	113	99	23	94	77
67	95	37	62	87	4	82	112	55
34	81	29	38	92	63	120	25	64
115	88	121	102	18	40	47	13	122
41	53	42	124	20	26	46	49	30
56	21	118	107	72	1	80	93	45
52	126	108	69	78	44	111	66	71
89	106	116	58	101	19	7	79	22
76	28	100	33	15	50	60	68	104
16	74	117	85	5	105	6	109	48
32	97	31	91	57	27	110	86	59
35	114	11	17	103	125	123	96	61

Result of Post-Card Competition, No. 23.

The London guinea was awarded to Mr. Julius W. Jacobson, 82, Grosvenor Street, W.; and the Provincial guinea to A. Leonard Nestor, 4, Warrender Park Terrace, Edinburgh.

Post-Card Competition.—No. 25.

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